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After the third lightless night, the business men took matters into their own hands. "If the city won't pay for the lights, we will," they told the city council.

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One newspaper summarized the result as "the probability of a crime wave, increase in the number of traffic accidents, and the loss to Lima business houses of a gigantic sum during the holiday season."

GENERAL ELECTRIC

Everybody's

NUMBER SIX DECEMBER, 1924 VOLUME FIFTY-ONE

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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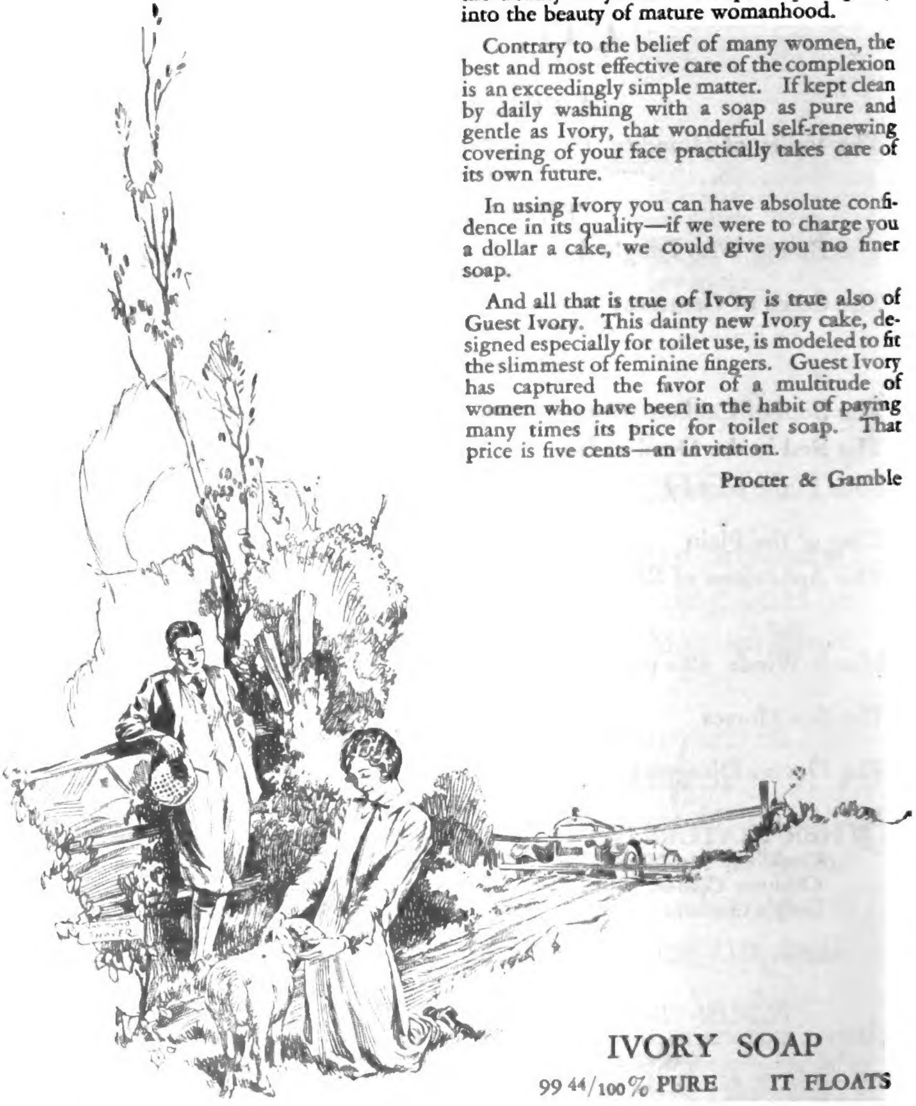
Her beauty laughs at years



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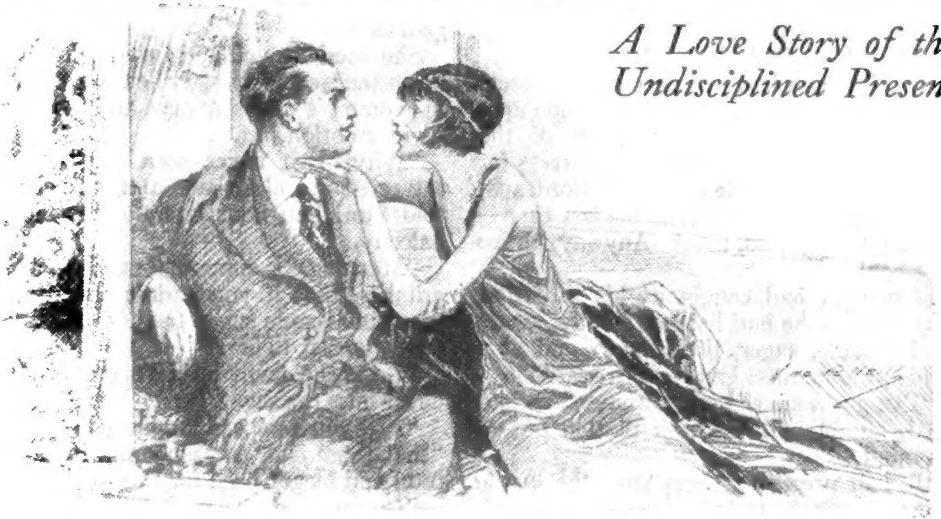


A Love Story of the Undisciplined Present

MARCH WINDS

Half the Tragedies in History Would Not Have Occurred, Had Their Protagonists Learned to Say a Single Word: "No!"

By Francis R. Bellamy

Author of "A Flash of Gold"

Illustrations by John R. Neill

STORK MACDOWELL once said of Tommy Dumbarton that if Tommy met the devil and the devil proposed that Tommy shoot his own mother, Tommy would oblige at once, lest a refusal hurt Satan's feelings.

"Not that he wouldn't hate to lose his mother," said the Stork grimly, "but he simply wouldn't reflect. All he sees is the present instant—the necessity of pleasing the person he's with. If he wasn't as well-meaning as the day is long I'd have killed him long ago. As it is, Fate will take him in hand some day, and teach him a thing or two—and then maybe he'll wake up!"

And the painter stalked down the stairs from Tommy's studio in Charlton Court, irritated, but delivered of a prophecy destined, long afterward, to come very close to hitting the mark. . . .

For Tommy, indeed, the thing began just five years from the day—on that February afternoon when he met Maizie Delafield for the first time, in that half mad, half glorious, wholly disordered spring after the armistice, when all the world that was not in Paris wondered what was going on there, and all the world that was there did not know.

He stood on the railway platform at

Cannes, that day, his eyes still fixed on the Orient Express as it disappeared up the track toward Italy, bearing with it the Stork's pail of maple sugar—sent with great difficulty from Vermont! Three orphans had swung their feet opposite him, on the journey down from Paris, and their plight had touched his heart.

No, they had had no chocolate or sweets since the day the candles were lit for Papa, in St. Genevieve's. The pension of the government did not contemplate sweets for the fatherless. Uncle Henri, of Bordeaux, had brought them chocolate the last time—ten months ago; no, nine! Anyway, ah, so long ago!

Something had caught at his throat at that time, as he had listened kindly, aware of their pale, eager, little faces—and of a sudden the impulse had been irresistible.

"I've got a sweet you can have," he had cried, all thought of Stork blotted out of his mind.

He had presented them with the maple sugar, just as the train had come to a standstill below the sunlit houses and green-clad hills of Cannes.

"But it is too much, m'sieu!" the widow had exclaimed.

"There is no time to open it!" he had cried.

The next moment the train had begun to move once more. And he had set the maple sugar pail on the seat, embraced all three children at once, and climbed out of the doorway, his erstwhile companions handing him his belongings through the open window, through the door, talking volubly, excitedly, as the train pulled out.

"*Vive l'Amérique!*" the peasant woman had cried, at imminent risk of losing her head out of the door.

"*La belle France!*" he had responded magnificently.

The maple sugar had vanished forever. . . .

Like some fine gesture of generosity, the whole thing had appeared momentarily to the giver of other people's belongings—and still did, as he stared at the disappearing train: a gesture instantly rewarded, too.

"Oh, that was really sweet of you!" a voice behind him cried.

He turned to behold a slender, golden-haired girl, standing behind him, a blush on her cheeks and a flame in her brown eyes. It was the first thing he noticed about Maizie—her vivid color and shining eyes, beneath her golden hair.

"I didn't realize you were an American," he stammered. "Weren't you sitting in the inside corner on the way down?"

"I was," she admitted. "You make me glad of it!"

She fixed her veil and turned and hurried down the train-shed after her porter, leaving in Tommy's heart a new and even more vivid emotion. . . .

"Why, I've never seen any one who attracted me like that—at first sight!" he told Stork, an hour later, on the hospital balcony.

"Meaning, I suppose," said the Stork grimly, "that if you hadn't already given away my maple sugar to those kids, you'd have given it to her!"

"Go to the devil!" said Tommy. "You'll never miss the sugar."

"Are you aware," inquired the painter, "that there isn't a teaspoonful in this hospital and hasn't been for weeks?"

"Go on!" said Tommy. "Really?"

"Yes, really," retorted the Stork grimly.

"I never thought of that," said Tommy.

"No," said MacDowell, "you never do!"

He wrapped himself tighter in his old bathrobe, in an effort to control his amused irritation.

EVERY time, indeed, that he listened to one of Tommy's explanations he always thought of the first one—in their apartment on the Rue Aegesippe Moreau, that first year in Paris, when they both had been trying to make their scanty allowances cover not only life at the Beaux Arts but the boulevards as well.

Tommy had taken their last five francs that evening and gone down to the Place Clichy to buy the supper, while Stork remained behind to boil the water for tea. Twice he had gone to the door at the sound of footsteps on the narrow stairs, but at the end of an hour Tommy had not yet returned.

Then the sculptor had come in the door, his blue eyes alight with a kind of fierce glow. He had met Suzanne Dupont, it appeared, in the street below, clad in her old yellow plush coat, her flat blue eyes filled with tears. She had just spent her last sou for a stick of bread and some cheese for the pinched, unwanted child by her side; and in the jostling crowd some one had knocked it all to the gutter.

"And not a thing to eat in her barn of a studio!" Tommy had exclaimed.

Did Stork wonder that he had taken her to the nearest patisserie and bought her all that five francs would buy? That was where he had been. That was why he hadn't come back sooner. What a set of swine these Parisians were!

"But what did you get for us?" he himself had demanded.

Tommy had stopped short in his stride and shoved his hands into his pockets, sudden recollection in his blue eyes.

"Why, by the gods!" he had exclaimed. "I forgot all about us!"

Forgot all about their supper! Never thought of it again! Damn!

They had had tea and old bread for the meal. . . .

That was Tommy, indeed: extraordinarily generous, amazingly tender-hearted, appealingly impulsive—but maddeningly undependable!

"In fact," said the Stork now, "you'd give away my pants, I believe, if I didn't have 'em on. I'm glad you're not running this hospital!"

He cocked his slippered feet on the iron balcony railing and stared out at the blue, sunlit Mediterranean.

Below them girls in white serge carried golf clubs and tennis rackets. On the benches of the promenade American officers completed the romance of ten days' leave. Up and down the esplanade, beneath the palms, jaunty doughboys strolled, while hard by the Casino a military band played "Smiles" and the convalescents in their bath chairs beat time for the French children to dance upon the sands.

Stork, however, saw little of all that.

"I wonder, sometimes, my Tammas," he said, "if you realize that you haven't changed a particle in ten years—that whoever gets his paws on you still wins. Do you realize that?"

"Oh, go to the devil!" said Tommy.

"I'm serious," said the Stork. "Have you ever received a cent's rent for Charlton Court?"

"I haven't inquired."

"What's become of that confounded Spanish donkey you rescued from his cruel master?"

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1924

"I suppose Will has him, up at Stafford's Notch."

"How much does that old woman owe you in New Canaan?"

"Oh, go to the devil!" said Tommy. "You aren't perfect, either, you know."

"I know," said the Stork. "But I'm not set at the moment on a pair of brown eyes and some golden hair, either. Is she the next act in 'Tommy, the World's Easy Mark'?"

"Maybe," said Tommy inscrutably.

He picked up his red and gold cap and threw his cape over his arm.

"If I can find her again," he said, "and she proves exceptionally attractive, I'll bring her up here on the promenade so you can look at her through your field glasses. But I guess that's as close as is safe with you!"

He lit a cigarette and went down the corridor grinning—aware in his heart of the truth of the Stork's strictures, but unprepared as yet to admit it.

WHEN a man is thirty-two, indeed, such strictures are usually no longer a novelty. In Tommy's case, they were distinctly well-worn. His father had begun them, some five and twenty years before.

Invited to lunch at the Clintons' in New Canaan, Tommy had remained all afternoon and been still affable at dinner time, when his father had appeared and hauled him home with slight ceremony.

"But why didn't you come home when you knew that you should?" John Dumbarton had demanded.

"Because they wanted me to stay," Tommy had replied, with a sniffle.

"What!" his father had roared.

"Because they invited me," he had answered again.

His father had crashed his fist on the library table.

"Learn to say 'No,' " he had said sternly, "or you'll end your life in jail!"

A remark which John Dumbarton, no doubt, had hoped would be most alarming—but which Tommy himself had forgotten by the time the Floating Island came on the table. It was his favorite dessert—or so the cook thought: which amounted to the same thing with him.

"It's much nicer at home, anyway," he

had remarked to his father. "I'm glad you came and got me!"

John Dumbarton had groaned audibly.

"You're too willing to please," he had admonished him; "and you'll find you can't please every one in this world. You'll end by pleasing no one. Don't be too easily swayed by your surroundings. It's a lack of character."

Somewhat later, he had given him a life of Cromwell. . . .

Now that Tommy looked back upon it, indeed, it seemed as if most of his memories were connected with such admonitory moments—some of them in the library in New Canaan, where the portrait of his sister Plinty seemed always agog in the light of the fire; more of them in the softly lit drawing-room of the town house in Boston, where the gold frames of the pictures seemed to weight down the striped green paper on the walls.

His grandfather had been merely an awesome, taciturn figure—extremely bulky to look at—who took him to the Congregational church on the New Canaan common and slept through the service, to his own dismay, particularly as the time for the collection approached and old Mr. Baldwin came with the silver plate. His mother, too, had been more or less of a vivacious but self-centered figure who wore watered-silk dresses and sang at the piano evenings while he lay upstairs in the dim bedroom.

But his father had been an actively aggressive personality, always pointing a warning finger at him.

"Yes, the boy will know everything—and be a fool!" he could remember him saying by the pond in New Canaan, on a quiet Sunday afternoon, while they waited for Sam and the horses.

"If that's your name for an artist—" his mother had replied.

"It's my name for an individualist."

"If he has a talent, shouldn't he be allowed to use it?"

"I have no objection to that."

"Then why object to my trying to let the poor child express his personality?"

"They've just jailed McKinley's murderer for that," John Dumbarton had retorted. And they had driven down Primrose Lane in silence.

He had reached a climax, the night of Tommy's departure for Paris and the Beaux Arts.

"YOUR mother and I," he had said that night, in the big library, under the portrait of Plinty and her Titian hair, "your mother and I have never agreed about this art business. You know that. You have seemed to want it—and apparently that has been sufficient for your mother."

Emotion had invaded his tall figure, as he plunged his hands into the pockets of his claret-colored velvet coat and stood up by the fire, his piercing eyes fastened on his son.

"I don't want to be eternally the ogre in your life, Tommy. You can appreciate that. Your mother has always given you what you wanted—and for that reason you are closer to her, perhaps, than to me. I am simply a person to get things out of, an unreasonable person who comes, possibly, under the category of an unpleasant old fool. I appreciate that.

"But I have a reason, you know. You are my only son. And art isn't everything, Tommy. There's a good deal in life besides colors and figures and beauty and tapestries and all the rest of it. Life for you isn't going to consist in modeling one more angel for St. John the Divine, any more than it has consisted in making paper for me—although a superficial glance might get that impression."

He had taken out a cigar and lighted it carefully.

"In fact," he had resumed, as he watched the match burn itself out, "right living is going to be your real business, just as it was your great-grandfather's, when he lived in this same house—stood by this same fireplace."

"I see," Tommy had said, because he did not see but wished to be pleasant.

"That's the reason," his father had gone on, "why I have been doubtful of your artistic career—because of your character. Art involves cultivating your senses, your personality, your emotions—and it's not going to be worth while, Tommy, unless you keep a tight rein on yourself. You're a Dumbarton, you're my son. I'm thinking of you only in the light of my own life. You won't meet five unselfish people during your life. I'm one of them only because I'm your father."

He had turned toward the smoldering

fire and leaned his elbow on the mantel so that Tommy could not see his face.

"I don't give a damn about the mill, compared to you. That isn't why I have insisted that you work there this summer. I have done that for your own good. Don't mistake me. The mill means to me just what it meant to your grandfather—my father. It *is* your grandfather to me. I see him in that small stone office every day of my life as I pass it. My life lies in it just as his did, even if the business has changed.

"But I haven't had you learn something about the paper business for that reason. I haven't refused to give you an allowance because of that. I've refused because I don't think you know how to handle money; because I don't think you know how to handle yourself. To me you are the worst educated man I know. In twenty-two years you've never controlled a single impulse; never done a thing you didn't want to do; never surmounted an obstacle, never learned an ounce of self-control or self-denial. Every task I ever set for you, your mother has undermined.

"Even that wouldn't matter to me so much if I thought you had anything to steer by—if I thought life meant anything definite to you. But I can't find that it does. You're just going to start over, so far as I can see. Just plunge ahead!"

He had lighted a cigar, gone to the heavy desk in the corner and written Tommy his check—a curiously arresting figure of a man, to remain in Tommy's memory long after his words had faded. . . .

ARRESTING conversations in libraries, nevertheless—no matter how significant—are not apt to affect people's lives. Nor is the Latin Quarter, when one is aged twenty-two, the most favorable place in which to digest a biography of Savonarola.

Tommy realized that when he had finished just four of the forty biographies his father had advised him to read—and then had thrown Savonarola out of the window! No one wanted to be a fanatic like that. Far better to imitate Rodin, spending twenty years on his "Portals of Hell"; to take a leaf out of Michelangelo and Benvenuto Cellini.

Art had absorbed him, after the first few weeks. Days in the life class where he had first met Stork MacDowell; nights in the cafés of Montparnasse or the studios of the Rue La Boëtie where the clan had first met and mingled; afternoons in that apartment in Montmartre where he and Stork had drawn each other while Jimmy Watts cooked spaghetti. That had been life. Gradually, he had forgotten his father's admonitions. Gradually New Canaan had faded. Gradually he had ceased reading the books.

Instead, he and Stork had gone on walking trips to Germany and Spain. They had made pilgrimages to Provence and Mont St. Michel. They had toured the solemn English galleries and academies and made youth's immemorial pronouncements on what they found therein. They had dreamed youth's dreams and viewed achievements in the making.

The garret studio on Fourth Street, New York, had followed.

He had given up week-ends at New Canaan, trips to Hot Springs and the White Mountains, golf and theater parties with that old crowd which still thronged the Harvard Club of a Saturday afternoon, talking football scores or baseball. He had given up practically everything in that life in which he had been brought up. And he had substituted Saturday nights at Terrace Garden, with Stork and Jimmy Watts for companions; Luchow's and Pabst's and Bertolini's, south of Washington Square. He had stood, stubbornly, upon his own feet, and worked.

Lord, how he had worked!

In the end success had come to him, all the varied confusion of a sculptor's first success—medallions, plaques, pupils, the figure of "Echo" for George Courtney's estate, the doors in St. Anne's Cathedral. But all question of his beliefs and philosophy had faded into the background. If a man lived a fairly decent life, indeed, he had told his father on one of his visits to New Canaan, that was enough, nowadays. Never hurt any one! That was a good enough philosophy—religion if you liked—to carry a man through life.

His father rather overplayed the game.

ON THE promenade, the memory recurred to him.

"It's true, too," he thought. "I still get by."

He turned his face to feel the warm, soft breeze from Africa. Before him, masts of fishing boats cast undulating shadows on the moving waters of the harbor. Bright lights in cafés, in florists' shops, in tobacconists', threw shining reflections on the trees of the square. From the hills the scent of orange blossoms drifted over the palm-lined avenues and walled gardens. Cannes, garbed in night, dreamed of gaiety once more, after all the years of war.

Tommy, however, was not struck by the fact. Dance music—American, unmistakably—had caught his ear suddenly as he came opposite a brilliantly lit stone palace. And he was looking at the heads of the dancers, through the open long French windows.

"Is this the officers' club?" he asked a passing soldier.

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"She might be here," he said to himself.

He ascended the winding steps for a better view of the gleaming ballroom, with its aviators from Arles, its infantry captains from Nancy and Sedan, its quartermaster majors from Bordeaux, its Red Cross girls bound for the Balkans, its khaki-clad orchestra playing jazzily before the shining mirrors; and here and there a girl in evening dress, colorful by contrast to the uniformed regularity of the crowd.

"I'll wait till they sit down," he thought.

For a moment he watched, irresistibly reminded of almost forgotten dances in New Canaan, in the old-fashioned white town hall.

The dance ended, his glance swept the ballroom—the couples by the windows, the groups by the gilt chairs. A full minute, perhaps, he stared. Then of a sudden his sculptor's eye remarked almost unconsciously the graceful folds of a blue velvet dress, the enchantment of a slim, golden-haired figure; and the next instant he saw her—just as she had appeared in the train-shed, outlined against the green, sunlit hills and white house, only now with the added touch of radiance which evening dress bestows on youth.

"Do you suppose I might be introduced to the girl in the blue velvet dress?" he asked the lady in black beside him.

"Miss Delafield?" inquired the chaperon, with her swift appraising glance.

"Yes," said Tommy.

"Your name?"

"Dumbarton."

Thus easily was it accomplished. . . .

"There's a curious interest in a meeting such as ours," he told her, at once.

"Why?" she wanted to know. Tiny spots of color touched her cheeks.

"Because the background is so mysterious," he pointed out.

"Isn't it always mysterious?" she queried.

"You usually know something about a person."

"I know something about you."

"What?"

"You're generous."

"Oh! he said ruefully. "Well—" And he told her.

"Well, now I know something else," she pointed out.

"What?"

"You're honest."

"But," said Tommy, "you don't seem to realize that all this is about me!"

She looked at him unwaveringly.

"Isn't that always what a man wants?" she asked. "Facts about himself?"

"Good heavens!" said Tommy. "Do I give that impression?"

"Isn't that why you wanted to be introduced to me?"

"Why?"

"Because you are a lady-killer?"

"Good heavens!" said Tommy, aghast.

FOR the first time he realized that they were still standing where their introduction had left them—and had made no move to dance.

"Do you think," he inquired, "that that is why I gave away the maple sugar?"

"Oh, no!" she said. "I don't think you are as deep as that."

"I was simply very much attracted," he said, "in the train-shed."

A spot of color came into her cheeks again.

"I shouldn't have spoken, of course," she said.

"That is rather gratuitous," he added. "Particularly when you don't know me."

"I judge you by the rest," she said coolly.

"Does every one make love to you?" he inquired.

"You are the ten thousandth!" she remarked.

"Only I haven't made love to you!" he remonstrated.

"You've only known me a minute," she pointed out.

"You needn't worry," he retorted.

A measure of irritation came to him.

"Perhaps you would prefer not to dance," he said.

"I don't care," she said.

"I certainly don't," he replied.

For an instant they stood confronting each other—until the realization of their ridiculous antagonism overcame Tommy and he grinned.

"You're a dead ringer for my sister Plinty," he said. "She can't bear to be decent to a man, either!"

He put his arm around her suddenly.

"Let's dance," he said.

They joined the moving throng without a word. She might be princess or pauper, indeed, so far as he really knew. But that question held small importance, he thought. She was like some refreshing glimpse of the past, in any event. Evenings in the Brevoort, with Sarah Carter and Stork and Jimmy; misty dawns with little Clorinda Hopkins on the hilly pastures above Stafford's Notch; Sunday mornings, walking down Fifth Avenue with Plinty and the fashionable crowd of early May. She was like a glimpse of pleasant days before the war, when life had been gaiety and beauty and youth.

She danced unusually well, her voice had an oddly attractive sound when she spoke, and her capricious attitude had more than a touch of something provocative in it. It seemed more like a kind of armor which she wore, than the genuine expression of the heart that seemed to lie back of her brown eyes.

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"A year and a half," she replied.

"Doing what?"

"Hospital work," she answered.

"You aren't just down from Paris, then?" he inquired.

"I went up there to a funeral," she said in a clear voice.

"Oh!" he said. "You don't come from New England, do you?"

"Syrchester, New York," she replied.

"I'm down for two weeks to cheer up a friend."

"It's the usual length of time," she assented.

Something in her tone seemed to assign him a place among ten thousand others—ten thousand precisely identical infantry captains, from ten thousand identical towns, saying identical things in precisely identical tones.

"You must get a very curious view of life here," he said.

"Rather disillusioning," she admitted.

"How?"

"Every one wants to kiss you the first night," she said unemotionally.

"What do they say?" he inquired with sudden immense interest.

"About what you have," she replied.

"Good night!" he exclaimed.

"How many children have you?" she asked.

"I'm a sculptor," he protested.

"What does that mean?" she inquired.

"A sculptor can't afford marriage and children," he said.

"I wondered what you did with your hands," she remarked.

"Look here," he said, "I'm not an enemy of the human race. Why do we have to be so infernally cool to each other?"

"How would you like to have it?" she inquired.

"Well, I am going to be here ten or twelve days," he retorted. "I'd like to take you to Nice or Monte Carlo—over the Corniche—or at least for a drive or dinner somewhere. Couldn't I propose that, without insulting all the best traditions of Syrchester?"

"I don't know," she said hesitatingly.

"I'll come at four tomorrow and take you to tea at the Reserve."

"We might go that far, I suppose," she said with a sudden smile.

"There's nothing much risked, anyhow," he pointed out.

"All right," she agreed.

"At four!" He made it definite.

Two hours later it still remained an engagement. . . .

"IN OTHER words," the Stork remarked on his balcony, at the end of the week, "she was just spoofing you! She liked you all along! And was just trying to be cool, because she'd spoken in the station?"

"Something like that," Tommy admitted.

"Well, her first hunch was the right one," said the Stork grimly.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you've fallen for her like a ton of brick—that's all!"

"There's nothing wrong in that, is there?" inquired Tommy.

"Not if you don't act like all the others," remarked the painter.

"We're good friends, that's all," said Tommy coldly.

"Necessity?"

"Choice," said Tommy haughtily. And he took himself off to prepare for an afternoon of tennis.

As a matter of fact, he was singularly positive of the fact that so far he had not made love to Maizie. They had gone to the little French cinema theater once, where Mary Pickford and street scenes in Los Angeles had made them forget that they were the only Americans in the darkened auditorium. They had driven to Nice and had dinner there. They had spent one gorgeous afternoon, too, motoring over the Corniche, gazing far down at the white, scimitar rim of the Mediterranean shore, ending at Monte Carlo, Tommy all wrapped in a civilian greatcoat and Alpine hat to deceive the complaisant military police. Then they had spent an oddly intimate evening in an obscure little café off San Rafael, where they had simply sat inside, secure from the driving rain—and Miss Delafield had become just Maizie.

But he had not made love to her, nor flirted as the Stork would have.

She had seemed intensely vivid and refreshing to him, after the dun masculinity of these years of sweaty, dirty, fierce struggle. She had revived for him that sweetness and wonder which he had not known since the days of football games and violets in Cambridge—those youthful days of Christmas dances and summer house parties, of moonlight sailing parties and romance.

Women had been outside his glimpse of life for so long that he had been a little fascinated by the whimsicality of her humor, the tenderness which underlay the armor she habitually wore. She was more like a wide-eyed child, venturing down this age-old Mediterranean shore, than the cynical, modern young woman she appeared to be at first sight. He had been fascinated, and not a little touched, by the discovery.

He was not, however—he told himself energetically—in love, and certainly he had tried to keep Maizie from fearing that he might be, after her warning.

EVEN beyond the plain fact that the first sign of anything like that would end their good times, there were three other rather good and sufficient reasons why he should not fall in love just now. Poverty; New Canaan; Charlton Court—they appeared in fairly kaleidoscopic succession, those reasons.

There was nothing to offer a girl just now in that dim, almost forgotten career which had bloomed once on Charlton Court. It had withered into dust these last four years. As Stork had said the day before, old Casey, the janitor, was probably the only man in the world who remembered that T. Dumbarton had ever been a sculptor; Casey, and faithful Gigi, still writing him those strange, faithful, undecipherable letters from Bleecker Street, reporting the progress of life below Washington Square. Oblivion, the rest. The ladder of success to be climbed over again.

That was the prospect on Charlton Court: nothing.

Such a thing rather effectively disposed of the rest of the reasons—his mother's ambitious hopes, his father's precise requirements.

"The war has rather done for the men my age," he told Maizie, three days later. "Those of us who have been over here four years, anyhow. I'll have to start all over again—compete against younger men who've been forging ahead. It's four years lost so far as I'm concerned. I'm forgotten!"

"But you've given four years of your life for an ideal. No one can ever take that away from you," she pointed out.

"Maybe," he said, "if that ideal is ever realized. All I can really see is that I've been in a bloody, demoniac monastery. All it has done for me has been to shut me off from life. It has sharpened the outlines of things for me, perhaps. It has increased my valuation of the present moment. 'To-morrow we die!' That sort of thing. I see life now as an exceptionally deceitful, insecure thing—instead of that rockbound affair of slow progress I once considered it. Do you know that as a boy I thought God had created old man Baldwin's market just as it was?"

"You're that much deeper," she told him.

"Maybe," he agreed.

"You've become They," she said. "Remember? They let you lick the cake bowl in the kitchen. They took you summer nights down to the lake shore, where great crowds of Them sat on those long, open, hotel porches, eating at white tables. And the band played in a little acorn-shaped stand! And you could hear the whizzee of the switchback somewhere! And that gong that started the merry-go-round. Only They wouldn't ever let you ride on it!"

"You sound about ten years old," said Tommy.

"I wish I were, sometimes," she admitted. "Just exactly ten—so that I could still believe in fairies, and that nice old man I thought lived in father's armchair, only he couldn't get out because he'd been changed by a witch. I used to put him in the sun, sometimes, so he wouldn't mind his position so much!"

"What a darling kid you must have been!" said Tommy abruptly; and he caught her hand suddenly. "I don't believe you've grown up yet!" he cried.

Then he recollected himself, and dropped her hand abruptly. . . .

AFTERWARD, that incident bothered him—just as a hundred other incidents of those ten days did. But at the time he thought nothing of it. No, the whole thing was an idyl, of course—Maizie and the officers' dances; Maizie and the little café on the Rue d'Antibes; Maizie and the midnight garden, overlooking the Mediterranean! The whole thing was an idyl; but that was all.

There were no crowds of English or American visitors in the hotels and villas along the esplanade. No Russian countesses or Austrian noblemen or German drummers bound for Monte Carlo. No English girls playing tennis! No adventuresses awaiting unsophisticated youth in search of romance!

There were merely they two, surrounded by convalescents, nurses from Antibes and the hospitals on the hills, a few Red Cross girls—and the residents of Cannes, sole patrons of a disconsolate Ritz!

Why should they not have a good time by themselves?

Even on that last day of his leave he did not see any deeper than that.

"Though I suppose I won't see you again for months," he told her as they sat on the sands before the ridiculous little images which he had modeled and at which she had screamed with laughter. "You won't ever get to New York."

"I'm afraid not," she said simply.

"And I really feel as if I had made a friend," he said. "Only to lose her—and go back to that rotten, muddy petrol station in Soissons."

"But you'll be going home soon," she said.

"That won't help any," he said. He looked at her oddly. "Did you ever tell any one so many intimate things before, in the space of ten days?" he asked.

"No," she admitted.

"For me," he said, "it's been like looking through a new and very pleasant window upon life. I'm very glad I found you."

"I am, too," she admitted.

"What do you suppose you'll do?" he inquired.

She hesitated an instant, playing with her hand in the sands.

"I suppose I'll go back to Syrchester," she said, "and sit on the porch on Highland Drive—and go to the sewing club—and—" She broke off. "You know, I often wonder just what I did use to do with my time! I have the curious feeling that I have been in a kind of chrysalis all my life before this. I can't quite see it again. Cliff coming home to dinner every night; and—and the movies—and nothing, in a way. I think I'll end up in a job."

"In New York?" he suggested.

"Maybe!"

"I wish you would."

"Will you go back there?"

"I suppose," he said. "I don't know anything else—even though it does seem the most useless kind of thing on earth—making a lot of baubles!" He looked out across the bay. "Why do you suppose I ever wanted to do it?"

"Don't be silly."

"ALL of us have got to start over," he said. "But it takes a sort of flame, a kind of conviction, to do anything in a creative way—ideas, paintings, marble. You can't fall back on routine some days, the way you can in a business. It's different, somehow. You've got to believe in it or you can't drag through the weary grind until the thing is finished. You've got to believe in it not only above everything else—but for a long time after the first enthusiasm has departed. And—somehow—I've lost that."

He stared at the distant mountains.

"I don't really care a rap! And you can't produce Winged Victories that way!"

"You'll get it again," she said.

"Possibly," he admitted.

Across the bay, behind the mountains, the sunset edged the peaks with flame and clouds of maroon. Among the fishing-boats outside the harbor purple twilight drifted across a gray sea. And in their sheltered cove the waves broke with a barely audible sound upon the sands.

"Perhaps I've just gone stale—lazy," he said.

"I'll be cheering for you, anyway," she said. Her hands were tightly clasped.

"You've made up for the whole war," he answered.

"I hope you'll come to Syrchester sometime."

"As soon as I can earn the fare."

BEHIND them, along the shore, a figure moved, stumbled a little, and moved toward them. But they did not see it. Twilight, tenderness, silence—that comprised their world. But the figure came on. A French sailor, he was—a stevedore, just a little drunk, a bandanna around his throat, a pipe in his mouth. Not an evil-looking man: merely a sunburnt sailor, in quest of a match, a light for his pipe; a figure who reached them before they noticed him.

"*Avez-vous des allumettes?*" he asked hoarsely.

His question—with its usual "*Pardon, m'sieur!*"—shattered their world rudely.

Tommy turned and saw him. "Oh, I guess so," he replied. He searched his pockets for a match.

"*Anglais, hein?*" the sailor grinned.

"*Américains,*" answered Tommy, and he found the match.

"*Merci,*" said the sailor.

He lit his pipe with uncertain hands. Full of affability, he was. A pleasant evening, a nice night—for pleasure, for love, for youth and sands, for Mademoiselle!

A slow blush burned Tommy's cheeks.

"Oh, yes!" he said.

Yes, agreed the sailor, he himself had had a woman once—

"Ah, yes!" agreed Tommy politely.

He looked closer at the man, with the sudden realization that he was drunk.

"Perhaps we had better be going," he said to Maizie. "Don't you think so?"

"All right," she said. And she rose reluctantly.

It was time for the cafés, the sailor agreed. He stared at them. Were they going back to Cannes?

"Yes," said Tommy.

"*Bien!* It is my way, too," the sailor proposed.

But Tommy stopped that.

"We'll go alone, if you don't mind," he said pleasantly.

"*Hein?*"

"We prefer to be alone."

"Ah!" returned the sailor.

A cloud of sullenness blotted out his affability. Alone, eh? He was not wanted, *hein!* That was what *les anglais* meant!

A touch of ugliness came to his manner as he stared moodily at Tommy.

"Well, don't be ridiculous about it," said Tommy. "Go on then, if you want to."

A gleam of contempt entered the sailor's eyes.

He would go where he pleased! Or he would stay where he pleased!

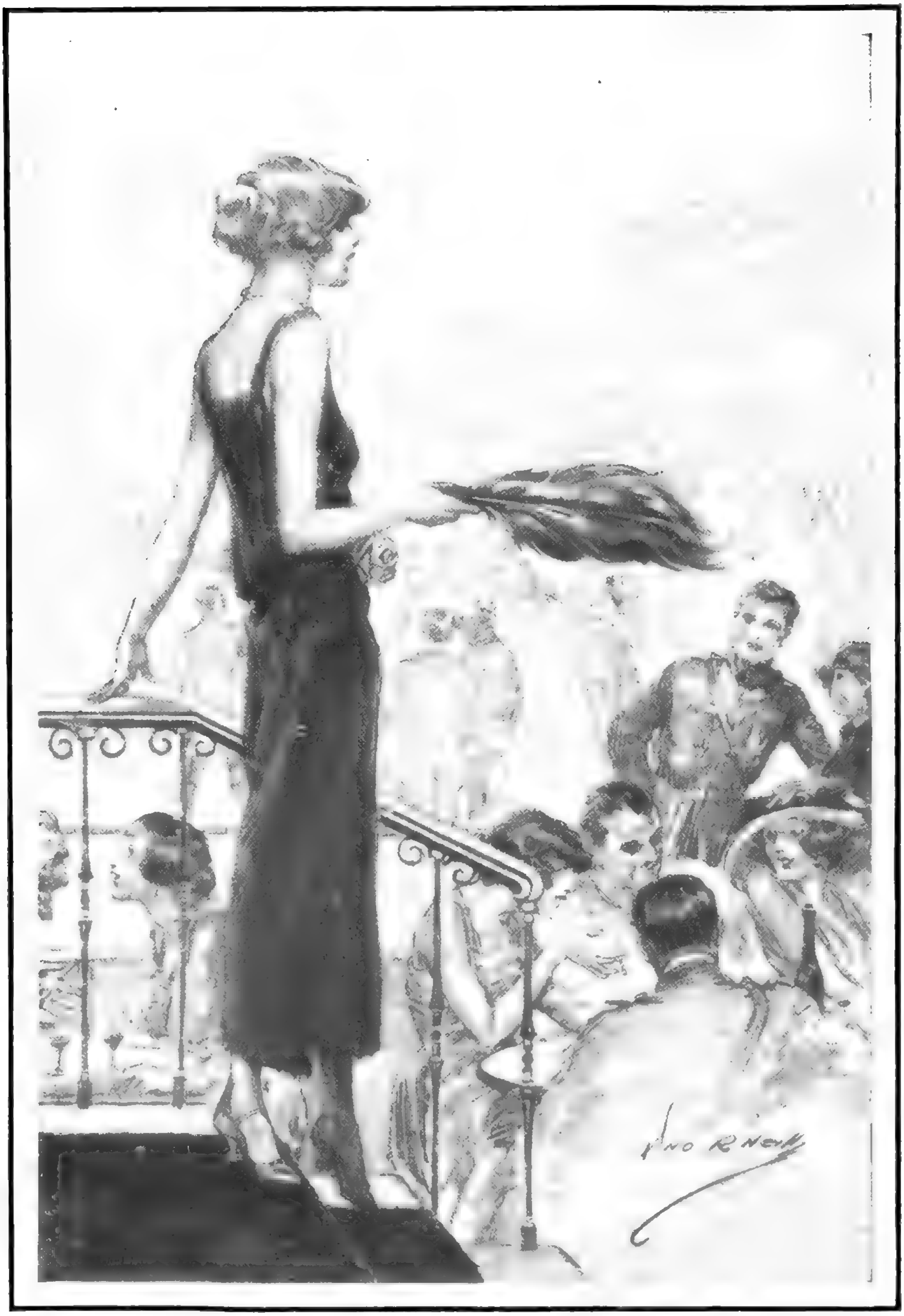
"Well, all right," said Tommy impatiently. "Only get out of here—and leave us to ourselves!"

He took a step forward to place himself between Maizie and possible difficulties. He did not see the light that had swept into the sailor's eyes. He did not see the gesture he made, either, as his brown, right hand sought his shirt. He was thinking only of the man's ridiculous persistence. And he took another step toward him.

He had no chance to go farther, for Maizie saw the danger that threatened, even if he did not; and the next instant she had flung herself upon him, her arms about his neck.

"Tommy! Don't!" she cried. "Let him go! We don't care!" She turned her face toward the sailor while she held Tommy's arms. "Go away!" she said in French. "Just go, please."

Passionate intensity lit up her face—an intensity so revealing that the plain meaning of it struck through even to the seaman's



Of a sudden he saw the girl of the train-shed, with the added touch of radiance which evening dress bestows on youth.

cloudy brain—struck through and brought him back, in a measure, to himself.

"*Bien*," he said, with a curious expressive gesture.

The next moment he had turned away, and was lurching on up the beach, leaving behind him, in the twilight, two very confused and suddenly embarrassed people who found themselves in extraordinarily close proximity to each other.

"You're a dear!" said Tommy impulsively.

Her lips were very close!

"I thought he had a knife," said Maizie, with a little tremble.

"You thought of everything but yourself," said Tommy, and suddenly he clasped her to him and kissed her.

It was not quite love, perhaps: it was tenderness, irresistible impulse, passionate admiration! Irresistible impulse of the moment!

But Maizie had no means of knowing that.

"You're sweet," she said. Tears came into her eyes. "I liked you in the train just like that," she whispered, "the first time I ever saw you."

WELL, it was a natural, inevitable result, of course—a thing easily predictable, so far as Maizie was concerned, from that first moment when she had stood in the sunlit train-shed and tiny spots of crimson had come in her cheeks as she stared at him; a natural, inevitable outcome, above all, of the days of the idyl. That was what it was to her.

But to Tommy it was absolutely stunning, like a sudden glimpse into some whirlpool which yawned without warning beneath a man's very feet! Love—Maizie! Stunning fact! Incredible fact!

Afterward, indeed, he could never remember what he did during all the succeeding hours of that night, after he left her in the shadow of the Villa Avignon at midnight and walked blindly down the hill to the dim bench on the promenade, facing the sea. There had been nothing base about him, he knew—nothing dishonest. He was very sure of that. But he had found himself utterly unable to say to her: "No, I do not love you." No. "I love you," she had whispered. "I—love you," he had answered. The unconscious revelation of her heart had prevented any other answer. He had held her close to him in an agony of tenderness.

But he did not love her, he knew. It was true that she touched hitherto unprobed wells of tenderness in his heart. She spread tiny filaments of beauty and tenderness over all the world of his perceptions. He could imagine scenes of wonderful and touching magic in a relationship with her. But love—no!

Desperation came to him, indeed, as he tramped the promenade, his pipe between his teeth, his hands clenched in his pockets. There was no use, he knew, in taking the problem to Stork. "I told you so," would be the painter's first remark. And then there would follow impossible suggestions.

Such suggestions were the Stork's favorite response to situations with women, because for him usually there was no real situation involved. The Stork was not of those who bothered about conscience or bourgeois conventions with women. During their student days he had been always and forever proposing parties with Suzanne Courtrois and Angélique Bossert; thinking up excursions to Brittany and Mont St. Michel, where architecture would play a secondary rôle; dragging everybody out to the dreary Bal Bullier or old Papa Bouton's—with his pretense of noble Russian blood and the plain fact of his Berlin waiter's manner!

But Maizie was no Angélique Bossert. By no possible stretch of the imagination could a man do anything but play fair with Maizie. And in this case, fairness, probably, meant telling her the truth—the difficult truth—the truth he should have told her at once, on the twilight sands.

It was a rather desperate Tommy, indeed, who had lunch by himself, that next afternoon, in the little café off the Rue d'Antibes, and sat by the little iron table until well into the warmth of four o'clock.

Four o'clock!

That was the hour when Maizie had said he might come again—the hour when she would be able to get away from Dr. Bigelow and the hospital and meet him in the cool living-room of her apartment, with its view of the garden and the sea. And it was long after three now.

What he feared was hurting her—the silence that fear might impose—as he rang the bell of the Villa Avignon and the concierge's wife showed him down the long, dark, stone hall, and he left his cap on the settee and walked into the living-room. "I'll be out in a minute," he heard Maizie's voice say, from mysterious depths. And he stood quite still by the fireplace, his eyes on the long rays of sunshine that stole in the French windows, illuminating the precise white and pink French furniture, the old-fashioned piano, the inlaid floor.

HE HEARD the swish of Maizie's dress. And the next minute she was in the room—and he was trying hard to remember, in the sweetness of her soft embrace, that he had meant not to kiss her, from the start!

"Tommy!" she whispered to him.

She withdrew suddenly, blushing vividly, and sat down on the precise sofa, drawing down her soft, tan summer dress across her knees, and holding it there with both hands while she looked up at him—and smiled.

"I meant to wait to be kissed," she confessed. "But I had to hurry so—not to be late—that I forgot all about waiting! Do you mind?"

Did he mind!

"You're the dearest girl that ever lived," said Tommy.

"You won't have to wait again," she said impulsively.

And he took her in his arms himself, soft dress and all—until she cried out, a little breathlessly, that she must be a sight. Then the mist cleared from his brain a little, and he recollected his iron determination, and pulled a rather long face.

"Why, I'd like to sit here—and love you forever!" he said.

By which he meant, of course, that he could not.

"We've got two hours," Maizie pointed out gravely.

"I know," said Tommy. "But—" He hesitated—and stopped.

"But what?" she asked lightly.

"I haven't any right to," he said.

She was smoothing her dress carelessly; but she stopped instantly, a curiously haunting look in her eyes as she raised them to his face.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Are you married?"

"No," said Tommy.

She unclasped her hands slowly, uncertainty trembling in her eyes.

"What do you mean, then?" she asked.

He rose and stood by the fireplace.

"I mean," he said uncertainly, "that I haven't any right to make love to anybody—I haven't any business. I've got about fifteen hundred dollars in the world—and this uniform—and no career. It's all gone to pot; I've got to start over; I haven't the ghost of a chance of marrying—"

He said it with increasing force, as the inherent truth of the statement came over him, glossing over the kind deception he thought of himself as practicing. The truth of it was undeniable, indeed.

"That's nothing to offer a girl," he ended.

"But supposing the girl doesn't care," said Maizie softly.

"She ought to," said Tommy vigorously.

"But if she doesn't?" asked Maizie again.

"That's because she doesn't know, because she's unselfish—"

"Or in love," said Maizie in a tiny voice.

"A man shouldn't let her—"

"If he has anything to say about it!"

Tender irony in Maizie's tone as she said that; result partly of her relief, partly of the sudden idea which had just taken possession of her. Tommy! Unselfish Tommy! Trying to warn her against himself! How quixotic that was! That was what was behind her statement, betraying itself inevitably to Tommy.

"But he has something to say about it this time," he said abruptly. "I haven't any right."

Unmistakable decision in his tone as he said that, this time, product of his desperation over the way she was using the weapons of unselfish love to combat his endeavor to make her sensible. He would never be able to convince her at this rate! He would never be able to find any better reason, either! He would have to be determined, and make an iron stand! He could feel himself weakening minute by minute before the sweetness in her eyes.

And her embrace held an extraordinary thrill!

He must not admit that.

ALL that was in his mind, lending his voice an odd emotional ring that Maizie felt at once, recalling to her the dim apprehension, the fear she had felt from the beginning over his attraction for her. It was all very well to talk of careers and money and being sensible. But true love did not die before such things. True love did not find them insuperable barriers. True love said, "If only we wait—"

Instinct, intuitive perception, told her that.

And in the afternoon shadows, she felt a little chill around her heart.

"Don't you love me?" she asked.

Her heart nearly stopped beating at the question. But she did not betray it. She merely sat very still. Didn't he love her? After last night!

"Don't you, Tommy?" she asked.

"Why, of course I love you," he said swiftly.

He could tell her anything but that, indeed! Let her think anything but that!

He sat beside her and took her in his arms passionately.

"Kiss me," he said.

But she did not raise her face.

"Or is it that you are afraid you won't always love me?"

"Why, Maizie?"

"A fancy—"

But he could stand her refusal no longer—the plain hurt in her heart.

"Oh! I don't care what it is, so long as you kiss me!" he cried. And he tried to turn her lips to his.

He meant it, too, in his way. But that way was never Maizie's. She had no conception of the impressionable heart that was Tommy's, of the imp of amiability who was always putting such pleasant words in his mouth, of the will-o'-the-wisp impulses he was always and forever following. But instinct told her that he deceived. He did not really love her! Love did not quarrel over such difficulties! And fear returned to her like a flood.

"Let me go!" she cried.

She wrenched one arm free, pushed it against his breast. Tommy, too! After all the idyl!

That was the cry that was rending her heart as she turned from him blindly. Just like all the others! Differing merely in method! With a fiancée, probably, or at least a model, waiting for him in Paris or south of Washington Square!

"Let me go!" she cried again.

"No," he said.

And he held her to him closely, until the passionate contact of it sent a burning blush to her cheeks, blinding her with fear of herself and her own desire.

"Let me go!" she cried faintly.

Even in the midst of Tommy's agitation, the anguish in her tone, the passionate disillusion of it, pierced his heart—and rooted him to his place by the sofa.

"Why—" he began.

But Maizie did not wait.

"I hate you!" she said blindly. "I never want to see you again."

The next instant she had turned and fled into her bedroom, banging the door behind her. And Tommy was alone in the room.

THERE was never a moment afterward when just a glimpse of brown eyes above a fur collar, a fresh breeze off the ocean at nightfall; a sight of sea sands in the dusk—there was never a moment when any one of these things did not bring back to him the memory of that instant.

A full five minutes he had stood, he always remembered, stunned by the silence, by the absolute quiet of the apartment, its hush broken only by the sound of the waves at the foot of the garden. Easily five minutes he had stood, thinking she would come back. And then, from the direction of the corridor, he had heard the sound of voices. Naida Stewart, a man's tones, other people!

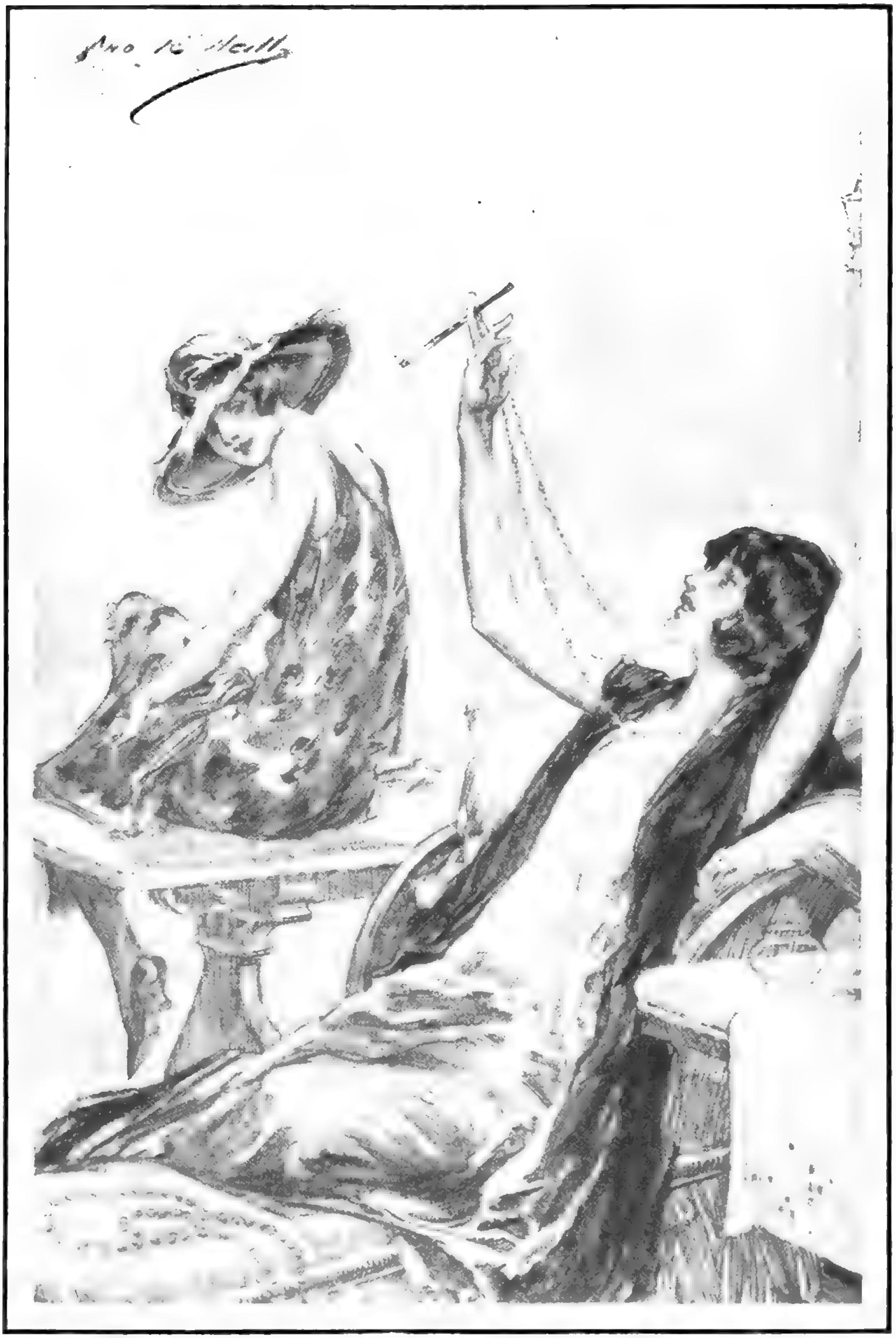
The sound had pierced him as if with a tiny needle, bringing him back to life. His cap, his cape—where were they? He could not explain, now! This was their own affair. He would call her up. He could not talk here—

All that had flashed through his mind, and he had gone out rather quietly, bowing mechanically to the little group by the concierge's door—

And had never seen her again!

He had called her up the next day, of course. Breakfast time had crystallized the desperation of a sleepless night, and he had gone into the telephone room of the Ritz and called the Villa Avignon, a mist before his eyes. Perhaps, he had hoped, she would be willing to forget, and begin again where they had left the idyl, on the sands.

He had rehearsed that even while the beating of his heart apprised him of the fact that some one was answering in the Villa Avignon—and that it was not Maizie. No, it was the concierge's wife, Madame Guiscard, the voice had assured him in Savoyard



"He fell, of course," Diane confided. "You can knock any of 'em for a goal with the wild-woman stuff!"

French. Mademoiselle Delafield had gone motoring to Italy. No, she did not know when she would return. Any message left? "Ah, no, monsieur! *Bon jour! Merci!*"

And he had been left alone in the telephone booth, his cheeks hot and an odd stunned feeling in his heart.

She had meant it.

The realization of that, indeed, was as clear and vivid to him six months afterward, as he sat in Patterson Shirley's dining-room overlooking the Hudson, as it was that afternoon when he waved good-by to Stork in Cannes and searched the railway station in vain for a glimpse of Maizie. It was as clear to him as it had been the night he sat in his attic room in Soissons, by the candle, writing that appeal to see him which he had sent to Stork to deliver and which she had torn up unread.

Much had happened since then: demobilization, Brest, New England.

He had stayed three days in New Canaan—gone over the paper mill with his father; sat at tea with his mother and listened to her social plans for the summer; gone to church on Sunday and been strangely moved by the sight of the familiar pew where his grandfather had sat, still with the same beam of sunlight across it. He had taken the train to New York and stood once more in the clutter of the old studio on Charlton Court. Stork had blown in from a New Jersey camp, discharged, and they had held a reunion. They had gone to see Gigi in his tenement on Bleecker Street. They had enjoyed one of Madame Bertollini's Italian meals in the quiet back yard where the cats sat upon the high board fence. They had breakfasted at the Brevoort, alone beside the pleasant open windows. And then Patterson Shirley's letter inviting him to Rhinebeck had come—and he had gone.

All these events had passed rapidly before the camera of time.

And yet the only unchanging reality still was that moment with Maizie—all else the hazy outlines of immaterial things.

What a curious thing that was! The realization struck him anew, as he sat at dinner in the huge dining-room, and in the pauses of the conversation there came to him again a sense of the spaciousness, of the cool perfection, the magnificence of this country house of the Shirleys. Pools and gardens and flowers; shining halls and simple wall spaces and exquisite rugs; brick fireplaces and terraces, and vistas from windows of the wooded hills and the winding, blue river.

Such beauty was worth while, of course. It ought to quicken the soul of the beholder. And yet he had no particular feeling about it, just as he had had no particular feeling about anything connected with this life he had come home to resume. He had only a little chill around his heart at the remembrance of a moment in a precise French drawing-room. He had only the same feeling he had had the day he received Mr. Shirley's letter and got out his old books and sketches of gardens, his old scraplike notes and pencil impressions.

"WOULDN'T you like to take just a little walk, Dum-dum—and escape for a second?"

It was young Diane Shirley's voice, he realized. Dinner was over; coffee not yet served. And rather unexpectedly, he found, they had come out on the terrace where the soft dusk still lingered.

"Why, I should be delighted!" he accepted. "Only—" He looked over his shoulder at the youthful satellites of the Shirley heiress where they stood in the open library windows. The fair-haired one was "Baby" Fortescue, he was dimly aware, and the other one was "Biff" Morgan; both, apparently, together with little Marjorie Clinton, Diane's week-end guests. Diane was at that age when one had satellites! Twenty-one, and pretty! "How about—" He hesitated.

"Oh, I'm sick of Baby!" she said serenely. "He's crazy about himself. Let's go out!"

And she led the way down the steps, toward the dim lawn and the shrubbery whence came the piquant smell of June grass, as if the world offered incense to the peace which twilight brought to the shadowy garden.

"There's something idyllic about it, isn't there?" said Tommy, sniffing.

"I guess," said Diane. "Though I'm so sick of palaver I can't appreciate anything any more."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh, father makes me tired!" she retorted. "The whole place makes me tired. Life makes me tired, I think."

Surprise came to Tommy; but he remained silent.

"A lot of vague, can't-tell-you-what stuff," she continued moodily. "It all makes me want a breath of fresh air, and a prize-fighter to love me!"

"Baby, I suppose," suggested Tommy craftily.

"Don't be horrid," said Diane. "I mean a man!"

In the twilight her dark eyes were like forest pools in the soft whiteness of her face.

"That ought to be easy," said Tommy.

"You wouldn't think so," said Diane, "if you lived here."

Tommy laughed.

"What I'm offered," she added, "is a choice between bunk and liquor. Give me liquor—as Patrick Henry said!"

"You sound incensed," said Tommy.

"I am," said Diane. She stopped suddenly and pulled a rose. "Did father speak to you about the pool?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to do it?"

"I'm going to submit some sketches."

"I got it for you."

"You?" Tommy stopped stock-still.

"I saw 'Echo' at the Courtneys' last fall. It kind of got me. You're a real one, anyway. I hate these long-hairs."

"It's a new qualification for a sculptor," said Tommy.

"I pinned father down at breakfast last week."

"Well, it's very decent of you, Di," said Tommy. "I had rather an idea you didn't like me."

"I was just a kid," she said abruptly, "when you went to France."

"You look enough grown-up now," said Tommy.

"I'm a devil inside," she remarked serenely.

"You conceal it well," he answered.

"Wait till you know me better," she said.

She caught the sound of the phonograph, playing Irving Berlin's latest in the broad center hall.

"Let's dance awhile!" she cried. "It's about the only excitement I can offer you. Mother won't let us go in to town Saturday nights, any more—she's got a Puritanical streak on! Come on!"

She led the way across the lawn while Tommy followed, considerably amused.

One thing was clear, at least. Diane had grown into a perfectly natural person. The last time he had seen her—except for that one moment at the New Canaan Country Club, a week before—she had been riding a pony; her costume had been middy blouse and knickers; and she had been highly indignant, as usual, with her mother, because of certain difficulties which had been placed in the way of her seeing a rather thin youth who wore a fuzzy muffler and open galoshes and had a general air of St. Mark's.

It hardly seemed possible now, in view of her evening clothes and cool youthful beauty and general air of disdainful self-possession. Her very presence here at dinner, indeed, proclaimed the passing of his own youth.

But there was no question about it. Twenty-one, and a full-fledged débutante! That was her position, now.

"YOU don't dance the right way," she told him a little later.

"You mean your way," he remarked, amused.

"Well, it's the way they all do," she retorted. "You should hold me tighter, not like a red-hot stove—and I don't know—slide your feet instead of hiking 'em up! Follow round. Can't you do that?"

"I can only try, your Highness," he said. "In fact, I suppose I could give you an imitation of a vise breaking a hickory nut—that seems to be your idea!"

"You might show me a little something unexpected," she complained, with a distinctly provocative look in her dark eyes.

"All right," answered Tommy suddenly, "I will!"

And he crushed her to him, of a sudden, and whirled her until they spun like driftwood in an eddy, and she drew in her breath with a tiny gasp, only to have it knocked out of her instantly as he sent her from him at arm's length and then catapulted her back to his embrace.

"Oh, boy!" she exclaimed. "You're not so slow after all, are you!"

"I didn't know what your idea of a dinner guest was," said Tommy satirically.

"Antony and Cleopatra," she retorted.

"Oh, Tommy!" It was Patterson Shirley's voice.

"Yes," called Tommy.

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But Diane interrupted. Her cheeks were flushed.

"We're dancing, father," she cried over Tommy's shoulder. "Can't your old fountain wait?"

"No, Di," said Tommy in a low voice.

"Yes," she said. And though they had stopped dancing and were standing still she did not disengage herself from his embrace.

"Why, I'll have to go, of course," said Tommy.

"Not when you've just begun to be exciting," she objected.

"Your father's my host, after all."

"Oh, host!" retorted Diane. She made a tiny face. "Don't be a dumb-bell!" The next instant he felt her arms about his neck and her lips upon his. "I want another lesson," she whispered. "I'll wait for you in the arbor!"

"HE FELL, of course," Diane confided in Marjorie Clinton at midnight. "You can knock any of 'em for a goal with the wild-woman stuff!"

She blew her cigarette smoke vaingloriously toward the bedroom ceiling.

"I don't believe it," said Marjorie skeptically. She was a yellow-haired girl, of a calm disposition.

"Really," said Diane. "I'm going down to see his studio and how he does his things the first of the week."

"You're always exaggerating," said Marjorie.

"Not this time," insisted Diane.

And she wasn't.

"I'm going to have a good time," she had informed him during their first conversation after his arrival at Rhinebeck. "I'm not going to get married. Sticky babies and a dumpy figure! I can't see it!"

He had laughed; but she had insisted.

The only thing she really liked, she had informed him, was esthetic dancing. Her older sister Gloria had done a lot of it with the Suffren Dancers in California.

"Though father can't see it for dust, of course," she had added. "He's afraid some noble youth will ruin me—wouldn't you know it?"

"What does your mother think?" he had asked.

"Oh, she doesn't think, I guess," Diane had replied. "She's too hot on the trail of something to keep her young! Maybe the pace is too hot; I don't know!"

And she had grinned, while something of her past had come back to him—things gleaned at New Canaan breakfasts, during evenings on Seventy-second Street: odd things dropped by his mother and father.

He remembered that because at the time he had wondered if Mrs. Shirley knew that Diane's expressed ambition just then was to break every greenhouse window in New Canaan. And he had grinned as he went up to bed. . . .

That had been the last time he had seen her, in fact, riding the pony, just before she set off for her fashionable boarding-school. She had still seemed like a little girl then—as if she still believed that all gardens grew in formal attitudes and had gardeners to attend them; that all people had tea at five o'clock and dinner at seven; that Westchester and the Pyrenees differed solely in the hotels one stopped in and the roads one's motor traversed; that most of the world was filled with lower classes of people who were not really human and so did not count.

Apparently it was boarding-school that had taught her her new and flirtatious mannerisms: her way of half closing her dark eyelashes before she glanced up; her habit of stretching out her silk-clad ankles and smiling at them; her trick of breaking her sentences so that their implications, sometimes, could be as daring as you liked!

Those mannerisms were new, but they were probably sufficiently misleading.

If any one really accepted her invitation to flirtation, she would no doubt cancel the party. She probably only extended the invitation because it was the fashion. Apparently they all did it now—Diane, Marjorie, all her friends, to judge from their conversation. It was the thrill, and the game, and the ecstasy!

They thought of little but men.

But underneath, Diane was probably as moral as her mother. It was simply a difference in fashions: a difference that made her seem peculiarly vivid; a little primitive; almost barbaric.

That had been his rather unthinking view of her until that moment in the hallway, followed—as it had been—by the scene in the garden. That incident had completely disposed of any conventional explanation of her. In the moonlight of the garden, indeed, she had appeared to him more like some vivid figure from an Egyptian past than a girl of today. The silver fillet across her dark hair; the pale ivory of her cheeks; the odd abandon of her figure against the lattice of the arbor! She had been a figure distinctly gilded with momentary glamour, in the monotonously conventional circle of Patterson Shirley's house-party. He had welcomed, almost rapturously, the momentary escape she offered him from the boredom of the trivial conversation on the terrace.

"Well, why don't you kiss me?" she had demanded after they had sat for some time in silence in the arbor. "Am I not fair?"

"Oh, fair enough," he had retorted. "For a child!"

He had meant to rouse her, too—pique sat well upon her! Any emotion was better than the starched pomposity of maturity, sitting stodgily up on the terrace!

"I could thrill you to death if I wanted to," she had said.

"Maybe," he had retorted skeptically.

"I could," she had repeated.

And of a sudden she had kissed him—a rather breathless kiss, laden with a curious ecstasy.

"Not so bad, of course," he had admitted lightly. "For a child!"

"Oh, you!" she had exclaimed hotly.

She had kissed him again—this time with an abandon that had torn from her the last vestige of his conventional conception of her. Patterson Shirley, the June night, the gleaming Hudson—all had vanished from his mind in the lasting contact of that kiss. Only her warm lips and flushed body had remained—minute after minute. An intense embrace it had been, that never once relaxed until the sound of laughter from the terrace had struck a measure of consciousness into his brain and he had stood up suddenly, holding her tightly by the arms.

"Why, you little devil, Di!" he had said.

But she had closed her eyes.

"I'll die if you go in now," she had said in a whisper. "Kiss me again."

And he had. . . .

Those kisses, indeed, had cast a vividly different light upon her. There had been no pose about them. They had been vivid sensation itself. He had become extraordinarily serious in the midst of them. But she had rejected all discussion.

"I told you I was a devil inside," she had interrupted. She had stared at him somberly. "Don't I please?"

He had assured her she did. After a half-hour, in fact, he remembered, he had not been able to think of any reason why she should not kiss him.

"IN FACT," he confided in Stork two weeks later, "she's just the opposite of Maizie. She's like a torrent of emotion that's got to have an outlet! Conventions don't mean anything to her!"

"Is that why she comes down here?" the Stork demanded.

"Mr. Shirley's been having her come for the family medallions in the panels of the hall," Tommy explained.

"It's as good a reason as any," commented the painter.

"It's a fact," said Tommy. "That's why this quarrel we've got on now bothers me."

"A quarrel, eh?" the Stork remarked. There was an ironical expression on his face, of a sudden, as he put on his Norfolk jacket. "Well, don't exceed the speed limit, my boy," he advised. "She's a peach, all right. Syrchester papers please copy!"

He grinned and went down the narrow stairs to the street, leaving an exceedingly touchy Tommy above.

For two weeks, now, as a matter of fact, he had been endeavoring to solve this question of the exact degree of intimacy permitted between a débutante and her sculptor, and his success had not been remarkable. Diane had stared at him as if she thought him out of his mind, the first time he had brought the subject up.

"But good night!" she had exclaimed. "You don't really believe in being prudish, just for its own sake, do you?" she had demanded. "What does that get you?"

Her tone had indicated a grievance—somewhat as if he had been an article at a department store, advertised as exciting and exceptionally dipped in sin, and had failed entirely to justify the advertisement. What! A sculptor, and an artist! Behind him all the sweep of life in the Latin Quarter—luncheons out at Argenteuil, St. Cloud, Versailles, Nights in Montparnasse, along the Boulevard Raspail! Months in Rome! On Washington Square!

And perfectly moral?

"Tell it to Sweeney!"

She held, so he had discovered, that there was no thrill in morality unless one were terrifically, dramatically moral—like Paul or Abraham Lincoln. To be ordinarily moral was to be exceedingly dull. She would rather be sinful than that!

"Really?" he had asked.

"I'm not kidding," she had replied. "I'm no good at the goody-good! Can you see me at church fairs, or doing the Lady Bountiful act? It's too much of a strain. Virtue's a nuisance. I want to get what *I* want out of life—not what some old idiot once said I ought to want!"

"Don't you care anything about the other fellow's ideas?" he had inquired.

"Oh, he can look out for himself," she had told him tranquilly. "He's only out for his own little desires, anyhow. I should worry. I want what I want when I want it!"

He had been both amused and a little stunned.

"But you can't really mean that, Di, I guess," he had said.

"I certainly can," she had retorted. "Just try me!"

And he had dropped the subject. . . .

He had deliberately put it from his mind, as a matter of fact, until that night a week ago when she had stayed in town at her Aunt Jocelyn's and they had gone to the theater—and a realization of the curious mist which she was beginning to cast over all their relations had come to him.

HE HAD looked at her abruptly then, in the dim light of the theater—at her gray silk stockings; her oddly abandoned attitude as she lounged in her seat; at her white skin, gleaming through her georgette blouse. And the glimpse had been like letting in a flood of daylight, without warning, on a rehearsal of an Egyptian courtesan's play in a Broadway theater, on a Saturday morning.

"People can see us," he had said abruptly.

He had withdrawn his arm from her elbow and leaned upon the other side of his seat, distinctly away from her.

"What's the matter?" she had asked.

"People can see," he had repeated.

"They've had eyes all along," she had said.

There had been a sudden dangerous gleam in her dark eyes.

"I know," he had admitted. "But it didn't occur to me."

"I don't care," she had said coldly.

"I just don't like the idea," he had said.

"You've liked it well enough until to-night!"

"I know," he had admitted.

"You can go to the devil, so far as I'm concerned," she had retorted passionately. "You make me sick!"

She had not spoken again until she had alighted from the taxicab at her aunt's and run headlong up the brownstone steps to the vestibule—and plunged headlong into the house, leaving him prey to an extraordinary mixture of emotions. . . .

He had hardly considered it a genuine quarrel, however, until the next day, when she had not come to her sitting at the studio; and he had been faced with the actual fact of the thing—of a quarrel most unpleasantly begun, and highly inconvenient, in view of certain medallions and panels. Just what he would say in explanation to Patterson Shirley, indeed, had dogged the footsteps of his mind all week, while he had worked on the fountain. But he had stuck it out and not called her up nor made the slightest move—with the result that the telephone had rung, finally, a half-hour ago, the moment after Stork had set foot in the studio.

"Hello," he had said confusedly.

"You sound awfully cold," she had answered.

"What do you want?"

"Nothing, now," she had said after a tiny pause.

"I'm not alone," he had explained, with a glance at Stork's cynical back.

"I just wanted you to meet me at the Biltmore," she had whispered.

"Can't you tell me—"

"Please! At six!" she had whispered dramatically. "Good-by!"

She had rung off, leaving him with no choice but to keep the engagement.

"No doubt about that," he muttered, as he got into his evening clothes hurriedly. "Though I'm glad of it, in a way! I hate to fight with people!"

With which remark to his studio door, he went down the stairs, a few minutes later; caught a Fifth Avenue bus at the corner and got out at Forty-third Street in a remarkably short space of time.

Lights, music, crowds, perfume—all proclaimed the hour of six in the Biltmore as he turned in the doorway and ascended the steps to the crowded corridor where youth and beauty in silks and fashion await adoration. But for a moment he did not see Diane—until he caught a glimpse of her in a far, secluded corner.

"Hello," he said then. "What's happened? You sounded very mysterious!"

"The family just left for Bar Harbor, that's all," she said. "And I was going to stay in town to go to the theater. But Baby had to go out somewhere on business, so I thought, maybe—"

She smiled up at him, with a hint of embarrassment.

"Oh, I see," he said politely.

She looked down at her gloves.

"I DIDN'T think there was any use of being mad forever," she admitted. "And I had the tickets—so I thought you and I could use them."

"There isn't any use in fighting, of course," he agreed instantly. "What's the show?"

" 'June Love,' " she answered.

"I'm game," he agreed. "Let's go somewhere for dinner."

"But not here."

"The Astor Roof?"

"We won't see any one we know there, I guess."

"All right. Let's go!"

They went, without further words—which meant, he decided, that she was willing to let bygones be bygones, and act reasonably.

"What are you going to do—stay at your Aunt Jocelyn's tonight?" he asked her at dinner.

"Yes," she said. "I got the key from old Mercer—so he wouldn't have to sit and wait for me."

"That was an accomplishment," he smiled.

"I should say it was!" she agreed.

They said no more about it.

The simplest thing of that kind, indeed, was difficult to accomplish in the Fifty-seventh Street house where Mrs. Jocelyn Shirley still lived. Young ladies, according to Jocelyn Shirley, needed chaperons, early hours, and other things besides cigarettes and young men to occupy their minds.

Wherefore, old Mercer, the doorman, and his occupation of waiting up for Diane or any other young niece who happened to be using the house as a Manhattan hotel.

"Does Miss Winter know you're in town?" inquired Tommy.

"Oh, yes!" said Diane. "Catch her closing her eagle eye! I telephoned her out at Rhinebeck, from the station. I'm the dutiful child, all right!"

"You seem to be," agreed Tommy.

"Let's get to the theater in time, for once!"

"All right."

They pushed back their chairs, amid the flashy crowd, for one more glance at the imperial sky-line of New York in the summer night and then took their departure for the theater.

"Should a woman declare her love for a man?" Tommy read, satirically, from the program, amid the rustling and hubbub of the entering audience.

"Marjorie said I *must* see it," Diane answered.

"It's one of those things," agreed Tommy.

And the curtain rose on "June Love," for the four hundredth time, even though it was July and most of the season's plays had long since gone to rest.

"You're really almost human after all," he told her, with just the proper note of badinage to save the remark from being an insult.

"Why, of course I am!" she said at once. She gave him a glance of unexpected softness. "Too human, I'm afraid—if I told you the truth."

"Meaning that the rest is a pose?" he asked.

"A little," she admitted. "Armor!"

She sat with hands still tightly clasped even in the stir of the outgoing audience.

"Love is queer, isn't it?" she said at last, and she rose.

"A mystery," said Tommy, with a sudden trouble in his heart.

"Like the rest of our feelings," said Diane.

They left the land of make-believe for New York's summer night outside.

"Can we try a roof garden?" inquired Tommy.

"I don't think so," refused Diane, regretfully. "I'll have to get up to the ridiculous old place."

"Well, if we can't, we can't!"

"You might come in for a minute,

though—seeing we won't get together again for a while."

"Surely!"

They gained the street, and turned to the left, toward Aunt Jocelyn's.

Breathlessness invested that name for Diane, curiously enough, for a moment—a breathlessness that almost hid from her view the sauntering crowds of Broadway, the thousand gleaming lights of the theaters, the electric signs against the sky, the street-cars, taxis, shops—everything that touched their slow progress across Forty-second Street to the gray-black shining length of Fifth Avenue.

But she seemed cool enough, light enough, as they waited for an omnibus, climbed its narrow, curving stairway and gained a seat on the top.

"I love to ride on these things," she said. "They're like big sea elephants, taking you around on a big, slippery sea!"

"They're uncertain enough," Tommy said meanly. "Aren't they?"

He took his seat beside her, letting his query die in an enchanted silence, as the slow wheels of the omnibus bore them northward, and occasional young men swung aboard, and on the seats in front lovers sat very close together, their hands intertwined, their eyes on the unaccustomed stars above the towering gray buildings, above the softly lit windows of art shops, above the beautiful bulk of St. Patrick's, holding aloft its cross to the clouds.

Mystery!

Gleaming, shadow-crossed city!

Summer stars. . . .

"I don't suppose you thought of me once, did you," said Diane, "all week?"

"Why, of course I did!" said Tommy. He pressed her arm.

"Have you ever been in love?" she asked him.

"I don't know," he answered oddly. "Perhaps." He withdrew his arm. "Why?" he inquired.

"It seems to affect people so differently—and be so queer," she replied.

She turned her face away.

"In what way?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answered.

SHE sat in silence until Fifty-seventh Street was reached and they descended the swaying ladder and stood before Aunt Jocelyn's house.

"I do believe the old idiot is up just the same," she said, as they stood in the vestibule, and she searched for her key.

"There's a light downstairs," said Tommy, cheerfully.

"Bother!" said Diane.

And they entered.

Further trouble lies ahead for Tommy, because of his inability to say "No." See the second instalment of "March Winds," in January EVERYBODY'S, out December 15.

A Song *About* Love

By Grace Hazard Conkling

IS LOVE like this to you—
Cool and wide and white
Like a window through
Dark, to let in light?

I hardly knew you came,
Yet after you were there
Love was no arrowy flame,
But space and light and air.

Such radiance finds me now,
Compelling me to see,
You must have broken off a bough
Of stars and moons for me!

A Novelette

The Bwana *Who* Laughed

One of Bobs's Maxims: It Would Be an Unbalanced World Without Women, and It Is an Unbalanced Man Who Has Never Thought of a Woman

By William Ashley Anderson

Illustration by Harry T. Fisk

IN A great dilapidated tent on the outskirts of Zanzibar, the audience, drawn from all quarters of the globe, suddenly became silent, as the proprietor of the moving-picture show mounted a rickety chair and waved a handful of printed programs to attract attention. He tried his best with upraised hands to maintain a dignified pose; but his appearance was against him—old pink-and-white pantaloons, a frayed tweed waistcoat over a collarless shirt whose tails flapped in the languid breeze, and a badly rolled turban that was too large for his little wizen head and only emphasized the dreary cratered map that was his face.

In a hollow, lugubrious voice, he made his announcement in four languages, ending with Kisswahili and English:

"*Juma-na-moja, watu wote watacuja hopa!* Shahli Shaplin!! *Cheka-cheka-cheka!* Saturday night, gentlemens all come! Shahli Shaplin! Larf—larf—larf—larf!"

Bobs Lamont, the newest member of the K.A.R. mess, threw himself back in his chair and, with his red face turned up to the gaping roof, went into breathless shrieks of hysteric laughter. It was absolutely irresistible! Impassive Arab sailors from Maskat; round-faced English sailors of the Severn; black *askaris* from the Ulogoro hills; bearded sepoys from the Punjab; Tommy Atkins; gentlemanly Parsees in varnished hats and linen dusters; half-naked Banians, squatting with loin-cloths tucked between their knees, chewing betel-nut and lime; Khojas; Goanese; Japanese; Swahilis in red tarbushes and white *kanzas*—old, young, middle-aged, with their women and their brats—all took one strangled breath and went into howls and roars of ecstasy. Chairs broke under the convulsed figures. They staggered against the billowing walls of the tent. They stood up to look at the laughing *bwana*, and sat down again rocking convulsively. And in the middle of the uproar the light suddenly flickered against the screen—and Charlie Chaplin stumbled into view!

"Hold on!" said the Skipper, after a desperate struggle for control. "You'll bust something, m'lad!"

"Whee-e-e! Shahli Shaplin! Larf—larf—larf—larf! *Cheka-cheka!*"

And away the tribes would go again; for that is the only argument that any league of nations will ever understand.

After that performance, of course, Bobs Lamont could never be anything else but "Bwana Cheka-cheka," the Master Who Laughs. As he went down the lines of his platoon, trying his darndest to look severe, the black faces that caught his glance would begin instantly to swell, the eyes would contract, the lips begin to pout, tremors of delicious anguish run over rigid attentive forms—and Bobs would save himself and his platoon from eternal disgrace only by turning his back abruptly upon his gang and reporting smartly to the Skipper that all was correct.

Nevertheless, they adored him and they obeyed him, because they knew he could be fierce when necessary. He was the safety-valve of the Skipper, who was burdened with responsibility and a distended spleen, and whose native sense of humor had to be disguised in bursts of indignation and picturesque profanity. After each occasion when the Skipper laid down the law and the customs of the land to Bobs with much force and picturesque metaphor, Bobs, standing with an expression of rapt attention on his face, he would begin to stammer, to splutter, and end with a helpless oath.

"Oh, get the devil out of here! How can they expect me to build up a battalion with a crowd of laughing hyenas for officers?"

Yet when the Skipper was suddenly ordered to take a flying column into the field, the first officer he named to accompany him was Bobs.

DESPITE his popularity and unflagging activity, Bobs often felt a wave of loneliness sweep over him. His home was on the other side of the globe. He had taken his commission on an impulse, qualifying on the spot because he happened to be in Africa when the war broke out. But for him there had been no flag-waving, no last good-bys, no tears or laughter at farewell to remind him poignantly of home. The few letters that drifted his way from old friends seemed to take the tone that he was well out of danger and having quite a good lark, safely tucked away in Africa! Bobs himself never minded this, because he was naturally inclined to take the cheery side of a situation anyway; but when his companions spoke of England and Scotland and South Africa, and of the girls who wrote to them he sometimes felt a secret pang.

It's all very well to talk about adventure without women interfering with the action; but it would be an unbalanced world without women, and it is an unbalanced man who never has a thought of woman. Bobs laughed, but he had his thoughts just the same!

One day the column reached a water-hole that was a dirty puddle with a tumbling débris of round slimy rocks that protected it somewhat from pollution by the larger wild animals, and around which several huge stumpy baobab trees were scattered. Beyond this little patch of drab gray and dusty green, the Massai Steppe rolled away until it seemed to dissolve into the hot horizon. There was nothing to hold a man's attention except the water-hole itself and the human beings surrounding it.

These were a company of black troops, trained from savage recruits. They still bore about their faces the cicatrices and pendulous ear-lobes that indicated the tribes from which they had originally come. Their uniforms of scanty khaki, tattered and dirty, were but meager protection, yet some had adorned themselves with the plumes of an ostrich which Bobs had shot for food. They lounged about carelessly, yet with scrupulous regard of their rifles; for as a Mongol's life depends upon his horse, so the life of a man in savage Africa depends upon a weapon.

Squatting in a longer column that stretched along the dim trail were several hundred *shenzi* porters, carrying supplies. Stark naked except for a bit of hide or burlap flung over their shoulders, thin sandals on their feet, and pieces of grass cord about their waists to which they had tied scraps of raw meat and entrails, they represented humanity at about its lowest level.

These, with the exception of a few white officers, sunburned, dog-tired, and most of them pretty sick and disgusted, were all of humanity Bobs had to look upon.

He looked at the black groups. The stench of those sweating bodies, the cracked, loose lips and scarred faces, all at once made him sick. In a sudden depressed mood, he turned his head and looked out at the heat haze along the threatening horizon. The revulsion of feeling worked a curious psychic change in him. After gazing wearily at the debased blacks, his mind involuntarily conjured up the most remarkable contrast that had ever been registered upon it.

He saw before him a very clear vision of a girl—fresh, pink-and-white, radiant, dainty, and full of laughter. Her name, he recalled, was Babette; and he saw her vividly as he had seen her the last time they had met. They had been playing tennis and she stood under a trellis of honeysuckle by the court, her face flushed, her eyes dancing, her little teeth gleaming, daring him to throw a ball at her. He remembered throwing the ball, then—flash!—the vision was gone.

The Skipper stood beside him, looking down with a curious expression in his quizzical sun-bleached blue eyes.

"Bobs," said he, "I'm sending a runner back. If you want to write any chits, he can take them."

"Sure!" said Bobs, tugging out his field-message tablet. "I think I'll drop a line to my *marraine*."

"Your what?"

"My little godmother, Skipper!"

THE note, strangely enough, arrived safely. Babette received it at her home in the country overlooking the Hudson River, in the midst of a house-party which up to that moment consisted chiefly of young ladies.

There had been a fall of snow. Everything was white and sparkling and crisply cold. Groves of large graceful trees were etched against a dull gray sky; while the deep shade of spruce and hemlock rising from masses of rhododendron and scarlet-sprinkled barberry gave an air of opulence to the setting. Indoors, flames crackled on the big hearths, sending fantastic lights dancing over splendid rugs and deep hospitable chairs and sofas.

In this setting the girls moved about, laughing, chatting, separating, swaying together as girls do. In the center of one of the groups Babette appeared with the letter from Bwana Cheka-cheka. It was begrimed, torn, crossed, and multi-censored. An atlas was produced; and a gay hour was spent tracing the career of this scrap of paper wafted from Africa.

Most of them wanted to adopt Bobs at once.

"No!" said Babette. "He's my private property."

"What does he look like?"

"I don't know—honestly! When I saw him his face was horribly sunburned and he was getting a wisdom tooth; his face was swelled out—so! Every time he went to laugh, he had a convulsion!"

Nevertheless, Babette wrote an effusive letter to Bobs; and he carried it in the breast pocket of his sleeveless tunic and read and reread it many times before a sequel could find its way forward to him. Then Bobs began to write without waiting for replies, trusting that she would write steadily and give him all the chit-chat of home.

Bwana Cheka-cheka was certainly the cheeriest and most indomitable white man his *askaris* had ever seen. No matter what difficulties they faced, no matter what hardships they endured, Bwana Cheka-cheka, making a joke of the matter, turned weariness into laughter.

Once when the thin line at dawn was charged by a veritable three-horned behemoth—the largest rhino the Skipper had ever seen—the naked porters dropped their loads and fled into the thorn trees. The disciplined *askaris* made way with a rush, but in silence, rifles up, eyes rolling whitely. The Skipper roared furiously from the head of the line:

"Shoot him, Bobs, you ruddy fool!"

Bobs let the blundering creature have three shots—one in the right hind leg to drop him; and two in heart and back to finish him. Then he sank on a boulder, and hugged himself, wheezing for breath.

"What's the matter?" said the Skipper, striding up.

Bobs waved his hand weakly toward the thorn trees. "Look at 'em!" he wheezed. "Look at 'em! They—they *flew* into the trees! Now look at 'em!"

The naked porters, having got themselves high into the trees in one wild nerveless spasm of fright, could not get down again. There they hung with contorted faces, uttering plaintive cries, literally picking themselves off one thorn at a time. Bobs caught his breath and began to laugh; in an instant the whole line, listless and dog-tired from a long night's march, was whooping joyfully—every single porter joining in the chorus the moment he escaped from his perch and looked back at his less fortunate companions.

That campaign, nevertheless, was dirty, unbearable, almost a nightmare of sickness, despondency, violence, a hundred unknown terrors, confusion, unnecessary death, exasperation, and a degree of mental and physical exhaustion that few can understand. There was not the relief of home leave nor the satisfaction of big triumphs. There was little news; few comforts; little recreation. One of Bobs's acquaintances, a pink-cheeked young Englishman, contracted leprosy and was sent away for life; and two others, for no reason that was ever discovered, in the midst of casual conversations suddenly turned away and, walking out into the open sunlight, shot themselves. Before the campaign was half over Bobs helped compile an estimate of casualties that showed one hundred and fifty thousand dead, mostly natives, since no white units survived the war in Africa.

It got so that seasoned troops would shoot at noises in the dark. Once both Bobs's outfit and the Germanies concealed in front of them blazed away in the darkness at a herd of elephants that stampeded between the lines. At another time the Germanies made their escape across a narrow stream at nightfall. Bobs's half-company, leading in the pursuit, was held up for twenty minutes, firing away at the flashes. The Skipper came up and, looking down at Bobs, said coldly:

"What are you firing at?"

"Clearing a passage," said Bobs smartly. "Their rear-guard's sticking it, but I can only spot their flashes."

"Fireflies!" said the Skipper with great repression. "The Germanies cleared out half an hour ago!"

That time Bobs did not laugh.

AS THE campaign dragged on, the environs of some of the camps became littered with corpses dug up by hyenas; and some of the trails became marked with an amount of débris that suggested the retreat of a large army instead of the slow advance of victorious columns.

Bwana Cheka-cheka's cheerfulness, therefore, might very easily have been dampened had it not been for Babette's sprightly letters. They gave point to the whole business. Ordinarily, the connection between serving in Africa, where the end might have been to have the little termites polish his bones in the bottom of some hidden donga, and the big issues for which the Allies were supposed to be fighting in Europe, was so vague it had to be debated. With a perfectly loyal and understanding *marraine* writing enthusiastically from America, however, all uncertainty came to an end.

When the column halted on long dry marches, Bobs would walk along the line of his resting men bantering right and left, followed by a ripple of laughter and sudden explosions, until he too squatted in the dust. If no one interrupted him with grunted or querulous comments, he would take out his tablet and write a hurried chit to Babette.

Spice was added to the affair by the fact that Bobs recalled Babette's features only in the vaguest way. She was pretty young as he remembered her, with darkish hair. Her vivid coloring inclined him to think she had blue eyes. And she was plump. All that was fine; but four long years had passed since he saw her. What did she look like now?

At last he received a letter from her enclosing a snap-shot. It showed her framed in the rustic arch of an old-fashioned garden. Her hands rested on the posts, and she was poised a little forward, her chin up, her eyes full of light, looking straight out of the picture exasperatingly.

Turning to the accompanying letter, however, he found something that made his sunburned face redder still. In the last paragraph she had written:

> How do you like the snap? I thought you might like to meet your little *marraine* face to face. But I don't feel like a *marraine* at all! Imagine! Do you want to know how I feel? Well, I have written it under the picture—but in a language that even you, with your beastly Kisswahili and incomprehensible Arabic, cannot solve. My expression—if you only realized it!—is the riddle of the Sphinx. And the answer is: *Honi wau, wiki-wiki!*

And, by Jove, he did know it! It is something to have traveled!

Instantly Babette's phrase brought back a memory of the Moana valley, with a yellow moon rolling like a Stilton cheese above the scalloped palms, and the warm waves snoring on Waikiki Beach—a palm-thatched pavilion, and in the yellow light of smoky oil lamps, swaying buxom brown bodies with long petticoats of grass, keeping time to a wooden tom-tom thumped by a withered old man, panting bars of an undying folk-song with an unforgettable refrain:

> "*Honi wau, wiki-wiki!*"
> "Come and kiss me, quickly!"

Bobs stared long and longingly at the picture, while his heart felt as if it were actually swelling within a contracted chest. Any further reverie was cut short by the shrill rattle of the Skipper's whistle, bringing him back to life and the dry dusty plain littered with sandy kopjes.

The *askaris* rose reluctantly. The porters took up their loads with useless grunts. The column wound away across the steppe, the heat waves rising about them like a flood of spun glass.

THAT day's march was terrific. The men were staggering and beaten when they reached water at night. The few officers were sullen and grim; they would have died denying the faint fear that had fluttered in their chests toward the end of the afternoon. Only Bobs had managed to keep up his cheerfulness—sustained by a written phrase. The *askaris* rolled their eyes at him dumbly, not quite able to understand this Bwana Cheka-cheka who managed to laugh through it all.

When they finally halted and the Skipper found his voice, after luxuriously rinsing his mouth and taking appreciative sips of the soupy liquid the men were baling from the wallow, he gasped:

"Phew! Gawd! If you can think of anything in the world that's better, name it!"

"*Uoni wau, wiki-wiki!*" exclaimed Bobs in a cracked voice, and promptly went into hysterics.

That night there was an attack.

A small German force, undertaking a forced march from the west, had fixed upon the water-hole as its objective. When it found the hole occupied, the commander had to fight, surrender, or famish. His force was a *kali* lot, so the attack was launched with desperation.

In that brief combat there was all the violence, chaos, and fierce passion of African warfare. The German *askaris*, almost dying of thirst, threw themselves through a rain of bullets upon a hedge of steel, gladly welcoming the physical violence of an assault rather than face the prolonged torture of thirst. In the thick blanket of darkness that seemed to spread itself close over that vague desolate plain the only sign of life was a tiny rim of horizontal white flashes like the fireflies that had deceived Bobs; while the thin snap of the rifles held no more significance than the throbbing grunt of some lions out on the steppe undisturbed in their hunting. The fight blew itself out quickly.

The German force, unable to break through the British perimeter, found itself in a hopeless position. Retreat was no longer possible. The violence of the action had completed their exhaustion. They had to surrender; and they came dribbling into camp, hoarsely crying out:

"*Maji! Maji!* Water!"

When the danger was past, lights began to flash; and the N.C.O.'s came in with their reports. The losses were not important, except that the Skipper himself was badly wounded.

He lay in the sand, propped against a sack of dates from which one of the *shenzis* was stealing even as his master lay dying. A Diesel lantern stood beside him, and in its dim glow the eyes of four black men glistened, eyes that had looked to him for guidance with the faith of children for many years—a Nandi sergeant-major, two Mwanyamwezi corporals, a Kavirondo boy crouching at his feet. Bobs was squatting at his side near the lantern with his tablet in his hand, taking dictation.

They spoke in low tones, the Skipper picking absent-mindedly at the strips of bandage that were wound around his chest. When the dispatch was done he gave a long sigh, tremulous with pain, but that was all. The Kavirondo responded with a plaintive sigh.

"For God's sake," gasped the Skipper with a faint exasperation, "make that boy stop whimpering!"

He turned gingerly on his side, and Bobs slipped an arm about him. In the momentary silence they could hear the lions' grunting still throbbing on the air. The sound had in it a savage magnificence that gave a solemnness to the wild setting as worthy in its way as the heavy pulsing of an organ hidden within the dimness of an old cathedral. Africa roared farewell to the dying soldier.

"Oh, Bobs!" murmured the Skipper. "It's just possible a couple of those Germanies got away. If they did, you're located. Better send a light patrol out in the morning with Corporal Suedi. Chivvy 'em! Hold this water. Send those dispatches off, right away—two runners—duplicates. Then wait for orders. I won't give you any because—" He caught his breath with a sharp frightened gasp of pain. "I think you've got—the hang of things. You can

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carry on all right—young fellow—m'lad. Understand?"

Bobs gave a croaking affirmation. He bent lower, holding his breath so as not to lose a syllable, though his throat was aching badly.

"If any private letters come for me, Bobs, take 'em and—and burn 'em! This letter-writing romance is a fraud! It's not the real thing! It's—it's not the real thing, m'lad! . . ."

A few minutes later, when Bobs rose to his feet, the world seemed nothing but dust beneath him. A black desolation of loneliness, doubt, futility and despair fell upon him. Gregarious scholars who argue upon the occult in crowded forums might have added something to their wisdom could they have stood beside the boy, rigidly alone, frightened and wondering in the thunderous darkness.

His worn boots were planted firmly in the dust. The lamp had been moved aside, and he was wrapped in shadow up to his waist; but his face was turned up to the sky, where the infinity of tumbling planets and blazing stars, like wind-blown dust swirling in immeasurable space, emphasized his significance.

His feeling of loneliness became horrible. Every living creature about him seemed to be occupied in destroying and devouring. There was no refuge, no safety. All at once he was overwhelmed with an inexpressible longing—a longing to bury his face in a lap, to cling with desperate hands, to feel the reassuring caress of a hand that loved him.

"Oh, Babette!" he murmured. "If you only knew!"

Dropping on his knees in the darkness, half afraid that some one would see and realize what he was doing, he grasped the Skipper's hand convulsively in both his and, with his head bowed on his chest, offered up a prayer for him.

AFTER the Skipper had gone, Bobs did not deserve quite so much the title his men had given him when he first joined the battalion. Without Babette's letters his cheerfulness might have been seriously dampened. But she continued her lively correspondence. Then one day he was instructed to put three stars on his shoulders and take permanent command of the company.

The war swept on with all its tragic chances, and Bobs was swept on with it. His men were seasoned fighters who respected him and helped his reputation considerably. He was in due course mentioned in dispatches; but since his work was done in the bush there was little opportunity for the distinction that is to be won only under the eyes of superiors.

The war to him had suddenly become real and dangerous. Before this he had looked upon it somewhat in the light of a chivalrous adventure; but now it seemed to him something tangible was attacking him with frightful cunning and had to be destroyed. He was filled with an extraordinary fierceness, convinced of his own danger, and feeling that unless the war was soon ended the promise of happiness that had faintly dawned for him would forever fade.

Babette's letters spoke most often of frivolous things—dances, tobogganing, skating, dinners, plays, the little privations and restrictions that were lending novelty to life, her own amusing efforts; but her messages took on tremendous importance when delivered by a grimy black runner who had, perhaps, traversed sixty miles of arid steppe in a night. Besides, they kept him alert to his duties—with a vision always before him.

One night during the campaign along the Rufiji Bobs went out on a reconnaissance in person with a small patrol behind him. These night patrols were always a strain on a man's nerves; and the greater his imagination, the more terrible the strain.

Following game trails through thorn bush or elephant grass, in the dense blackness even the cleverest scout finds it almost impossible to tell what deadly menace may be standing at arm's length before his face. Entirely aside from the risks of encountering the enemy, the scout may be surrounded by danger.

The heavy breathing of a primordial monster, a faint rustle of grass, an inexplicable crackling, a whistling snort, an uncomfortable premonition that something is about to leap from behind, a lumbering crash, something soft underfoot, a horrible grunt, a long tittering moan, a sudden throbbing silence that is worse than any noise—these may be danger signals of the jungle. The human enemy announce themselves with a searing spurt of white flame and a ratatatat like the sound of a boy's "tick-tack" against a windowpane on Hallowe'en.

When an orange glow and a thread of light along the mountain-tops gave evidence of the rising moon, Bobs came to a halt and considered whether it would be worth while to continue going forward. The light of the moon would certainly be a guide and a comfort; but it might also prove a traitor. The immediate terrain was rolling, covered with high tangled grass, and dotted with mimosa; but it fell away into rough broken country, with some dimly outlined baobab trees like gray elongated haystacks, in a depression in front of them; and in the background were low mountains with outlines sharp as if cut out of cardboard.

As Bobs watched uncertainly to judge how much more of a shadow the moon might cast, it thrust itself above the horizon, orange-colored, warm, and wanton. It looked to him emarkably like the moon that night over the Moana valley; and of course that line of thought suggested Babette.

A smile flickered across his face. The line of tense *askaris* behind him, waiting silently for his decision, felt the relaxation, and the line became supple.

FIXING his eye on a baobab tree that marked a turn in the trail, Bobs made for it, zigzagging in and out of the shadows. After about three strides he stumbled awkwardly and plunged forward, his white face plowing into the dust. The *askaris* scattered like leaves into the bush, whipped by the spray of a machine-gun nested on top of the baobab.

It seemed to Bobs that some one must have hit him on the side of the head with a knob-kerry; but as he floated off with a dumb drifting sensation, he simply felt miserably that this accident had ruined everything.

Taking desperate chances, Corporal Suedi writhed through stabbing thorns and jagged pumice stone and dragged Bwana Cheka-cheka to shelter. The black corporal was not sure that he had risked his life to any good purpose. But he was amply rewarded when Bwana Cheka-cheka opened his glazed eyes, and with a faint delirious laugh murmured:

"*Honi wau, wiki-wiki!*"

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The letters which Babette wrote Bobs in the course of the three months just before and after his adventure with the baobab tree never reached their destination. No reply ever came to them. She made a point of looking up the casualty lists, but this sector was entirely too remote for her to be sure of the available information.

Anyway, Bobs had ceased to write. So also did she, after wetting a number of handkerchiefs, and gazing often at the moon with a sorrowful heart—for she knew the moon she gazed at had soared over Africa.

The reason that none of Babette's letters was ever acknowledged or accounted for was simple enough, though it involved a tremendous amount of official investigation and correspondence that is quite probably continuing to this day.

The Hindu postal clerk at the crossing at Menda had received in his care several sacks of mail that had been accumulating at Schiedel's. It was all supposed to go back to Lindi, where in the event of failure to locate the addresses it was to be sent on to Nairobi for final disposal. The babu had an idea that this particular mail would never reach its intended destination anyway; and most of the most promising packages had already been abstracted. Moreover, the day was hot, and when he reached a clear stream of water, looking cool and promising in the umbrageous shelter of some mango trees, he decided to forget duty for a moment and enjoy the spiritual and physical pleasure of complete ablution.

The porters stacked the sacks under the trees and proceeded to gorge the yellow mangoes that littered the ground. The babu stripped, and going to the edge of the stream, squatted, and with cupped palms proceeded to splash water over his fat quivering body. He looked like a fine old Japanese carving in sandalwood—full, voluptuous in figure, with a waxy skin, and long fine white whiskers growing on the sides of his chin. The top of his head gleamed as baldly as an ostrich egg. His expression was reposeful and full of dignity. Despite his nakedness, it would be hard to imagine any one more venerable or more worthy of the greatest respect and consideration. Yet some devils of Germany *askaris*, scouting toward Schiedel's, and discovering this plump squatting bird, flushed him with a volley of shots!

They did not apparently aim at the babu. But they splashed water on him, and flicked dust behind. Without a word he rose, staggered, piroutted, and fled along the dusty trail toward Schiedel's with his whiskers streaming over his gleaming shoulder, crying out:

"It is grossly unfair! I amnon combatant! Strictly noncombatant!"

And that was the last any one ever saw of Babette's and Bobs's letters. In fact it was the end of their African romance, altogether.

Bobs, after lingering in the Dar-es-Salaam hospital, was finally decreed a chance to survive, and was slung up the side of a hospital ship and sent down to South Africa to fight for his life in a cool climate.

That was a year of tremendous events. It was one of those very rare periods of history when no man in all the world was great enough to stand forth above his fellow men. The greatest were subdued by vital responsibilities; and the least important, if his soul were sincere, had in him much that tends toward greatness. Human beings were swept on by irresistible mass impulses. The culture and discipline of generations were suddenly crystallized in national character. Nations arose, and the individuals were lost in them. The heartbreak, the untold anguish of suffering individuals, were only as light bruises and contusions on the political bodies, lightly received and forgotten with no great trouble.

Girls like Babette could hardly understand it. At a safely remote distance from the shock of the battle, they flamed with the patriotic fervor that enabled the nations to endure; but they felt nothing of its horrors except when presented in a picturesque form. They saw the color of the leaping flames, but they were not burned. They saw all the romance but the tragedy was very dim.

Babette said proudly, but not unconsciously of its humor:

"I write to one in Italy; one in the North Sea fleet; three in France; and one even in Africa!"

BOBS was the first one to enter into silence. When it at last dawned on Babette that her flippant, light-hearted letters of gaiety and good cheer were destined for the void—that Bwana Cheka-cheka would no more send idiotic notes full of laughter to remind her that there was still war in Africa—she felt a sudden inexplicable terror. When this passed, for a long time her heart ached. She could no longer write gay letters in a flippant mood. Her vision became broader, her sympathy more real.

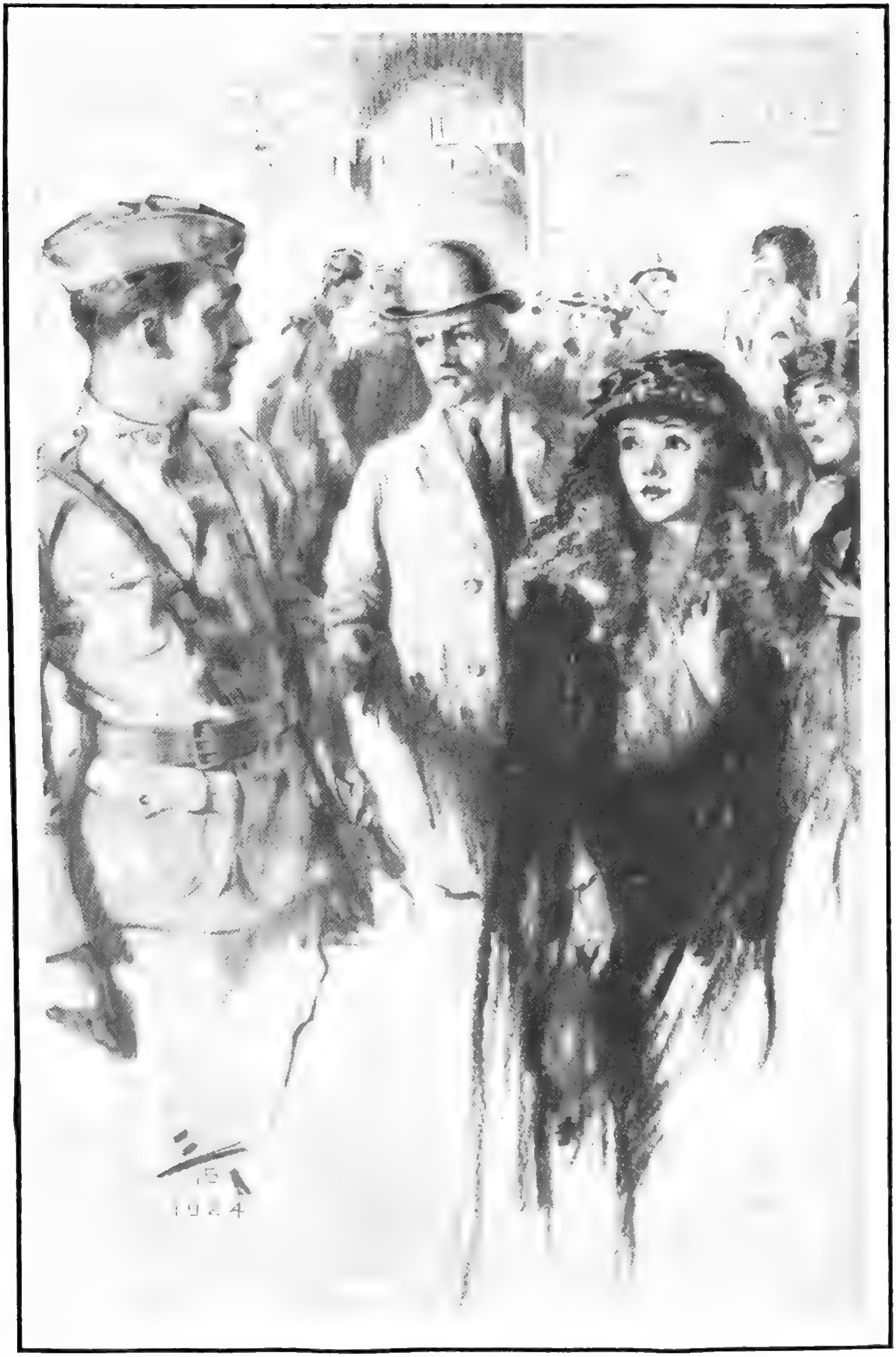
Through the influence of her uncle, who had been a member of the purchasing commission for Russia, she eventually obtained a secretarial position in the French Consulate in New York. Her knowledge of French was excellent, so her work was real, and she applied herself to it very earnestly for six months. About that time it became necessary for her uncle to make a flying trip to Paris.

Within the private councils there was a feeling that the war was at last approaching its end. Diplomats, economists and politicians were stirring. Dr. Roberts's advice was sought on some Russian phase of the situation. Through extraordinary influence, he was permitted to bring his wife to France with him, and Babette as secretary.

She went into this work with great enthusiasm, but no false pride as to her importance. The rows of armless and legless men in blue sitting on the park benches in London were sufficiently chastening. She learned for the first time in her life that it was not enough to be merely beautiful; women as pets seemed to have lost their importance. Babette did her uncle's work modestly and swiftly.

The milling crowds of London astonished her. The seeming openness of France was equally astonishing. Paris, though a war capital, struck her as remarkably spacious; she was less likely to get lost in the crowds than she was in London; and yet the current of humanity swept endlessly by. She learned the secret when she visited the railroad stations; they were choked with milling mobs that spoke the languages of Babel. She understood, then, that people did not remain in Paris; they merely passed through. Her uncle's business, in fact, was accomplished in a fortnight. Events then began to move with great swiftness. Galvanic tremors were shooting through the Allies. The end was at hand.

This realization filled Babette with a great listlessness. In the mobs, amid the uproar and the chatter, she felt very lonely Compliments were flung too quickly, too



One excited glance was enough to satisfy Dr. Roberts. "Major!" said he breathlessly. "Are you going to Portsmouth by any chance?"

lightly; as though men expected to accomplish their full purpose, whatever it might be, in the course of the afternoon—shooting out their wrists to keep track of flying time. Those whose manner was more studied, were silent, sardonic, as if there were things in their lives they could not discuss, and they had no heart for bantering. On the other hand, boys had an air of mirthful recklessness that was unnerving. The thing that most impressed her was the modesty of the generals.

Great warriors, rainbow-chested, would boast endlessly without any apology about the prowess of their offspring.

Dr. Roberts was called suddenly to London. As he was about to leave in a taxi with his family for the Gare St. Lazare, a young French officer leaped out of a car with a message urging him to take advantage of the military plane service as it was of paramount importance that he be present for fifteen minutes that evening in Downing Street. Dr. Roberts uttered an exclamation, becoming a little flustered. How could he abandon his women-folk, when their luggage had already gone on ahead?

The young Frenchman was to be his escort; he could not therefore proffer his services.

"Never mind us, uncle!" said Babette firmly, startled at the thought that they might be interfering with matters of great importance. "Get our tickets at the station, and we'll meet you in London!"

Mrs. Roberts was a woman of few words, but great depths of sympathy.

"For heaven's sake, go!" said she.

At the station, amid the confusion and uproar of eighty-nine nations clamoring for squatting place in the trains, Dr. Roberts's doubts again assailed him. How could he possibly cast his wife and niece into that maelstrom? He pictured the long dark journey to Havre; the nocturnal arrival in the cluttered port with its mysterious goings and comings; the night boat on the troubled waters! In his confusion of mind it seemed to him he was being called upon to choose between losing the war and losing his family!

At this point he caught the eye of an American major of infantry who was looking at him with a smirk of repressed amusement. To the officer the situation was by no means plain, but the agitation and querulousness of the pater-familias was obvious enough, while the grim resignation of the silent mother and the broken expostulations of the determined daughter certainly suggested elements of humor. Besides, the daughter was beautiful; no American could overlook that.

ONE excited glance was enough to satisfy Dr. Roberts. He saw a tall smiling American, wearing his uniform with ease and comfort; a British overcoat to suggest cosmopolitan understanding; a light haversack slung from his shoulder to imply complete freedom of action. Dr. Roberts thanked God in his heart and lunged toward him.

"I say, major!" said he breathlessly. "Are you going to Portsmouth by any chance?"

"Yes," said the major.

"Well, sir, I'm in distress—positively in distress. I'm Dr. Roberts, and I must leave instantly on a matter of great importance; yet I don't see how I can leave the ladies without escort. Never have traveled in France, alone, you see—"

"I see," said the major, shifting his haversack.

"Would you be so kind, just to—eh—keep an eye on them, so far as the boat?"

"With the greatest of pleasure. But here, we'd better hop it. That train's due to leave in ten minutes." The officer, who had looked thoroughly at repose a moment before, came into action with startling suddenness. He took Dr. Roberts by one hand and tugged at a porter with the other, laughing good-naturedly to temper the brusqueness of his action; and, bringing them both up to the ladies, fell upon the luggage. Beaming with relief, breathless from the pushing about he was getting, Dr. Roberts ejaculated incoherent introductions on the run—and a moment later was himself lost in the crowd.

Mrs. Roberts's reservations had been made successfully at the booth a moment before. There was no difficulty in finding seats for her and Babette, who had fallen into wistful silence as the soldier swung her up the steps, packed the luggage swiftly and surely in the racks and under the seats, tipped the porters, interviewed the guards, overcoming every difficulty with friendly badinage. When at last she was comfortably settled, Babette could not help feeling a secret pleasure at the prospect of riding to Havre, the major at her side. But she was disappointed. In the midst of their thanks he had to excuse himself, for the compartment had filled up, the train was moving, and his own reservation was in another carriage.

"What a splendid young man!" said Mrs. Roberts, as their escort shouldered his way out of the compartment and down the corridor.

Babette said nothing; but her heart, which was beating more rapidly than usual, felt suddenly empty. She looked out into the gathering darkness with wet eyes. She had known this man for only fifteen minutes; all she had seen of him was what could be gathered in surreptitious glances taken on the run; in fact, embarrassed at the thought that they were imposing on his freedom, she avoided looking at him. Yet the moment he left them, she felt that she had lost a friend.

Before they reached Havre, she thoroughly hated the shovel-bearded Frenchman who sat beside her—a most modest and estimable gentleman who remained absorbed in his magazines and never once looked out at the countryside dotted with villages and isolated farms.

Occasionally the major looked into the compartment with a smile, a question, a bit of information. He found them their places in the dining-car; but again had to leave them, for no reservation had been made for him. He made a dinner of some hard-boiled eggs and rolls bought at the carriage window.

At Havre he got them successfully off the train and into the groaning Normandie bus, reaching the hotel himself on foot in time to see that they got their room, which had been reserved in Mrs. Roberts's name by telegraph from Paris. The lobby was crowded with people clamoring vainly for places to sleep.

"I haven't got a chance here," said the major. "But you'll be very comfortable. They have one of the best tables in France, if you're at all fond of sea food. They're right at the source of supplies, you know, so there's practically no limit. Now, the boat doesn't leave until tomorrow evening after dark. Suppose I call for you then."

"Oh, come and have lunch or dinner with us!" exclaimed Mrs. Roberts.

"But he may be on duty," murmured Babette.

"Not at all! Delighted! But—but I'm not intruding?"

"Intruding!" exclaimed Babette. "What an idea! When we've been hanging on to you like poor relations!"

She looked him full in the face, her warm eyes gleaming, her red lips parted as though about to say more. The major blinked at her with a blank, awed expression; his eyes blazed, then smoldered once more with little sparks of perplexity. Babette's hands had been up at her throat fumbling with the fastening of her heavy fur coat. Slowly she opened her hands and pressed her palms tightly against her bosom. She was suffocating! What was it in that man's eyes that haunted her? She felt light and dizzy as she went up to her room. All at once it occurred to her that she saw in his eyes, behind the hard glints and the soft lights of laughter, a reflection of her own loneliness. The discovery had a powerful effect on her.

THE next day, over an early dinner at five o'clock, they sat side by side, feeling somewhat constrained. Mrs. Roberts's ample bulk sufficiently balanced the opposite side of the table. But her conversation, amazingly, dominated the party. Ordinarily she was extremely taciturn; now, looking with beaming eyes upon the very attractive and well-matched couple who were, in the conventional sense, under her wing, her soul expanded. It may have been that the dazzling impressions of Paris had driven her into a silence from which she now emerged, refreshed, eager for the fray. Or it may have been due to the dinner, for she was inordinately fond of sea food. In any case, though she talked with great fluency and volume, she also ate with considerable gusto. Unfortunately for the good-hearted lady, her delight was exceedingly short-lived.

The little cross-Channel boat plunged into an abyss of darkness. Dimly overhead, as they rounded the breakwater and took the first cold wave sweeping over the fore quarter, the major pointed out to Babette, who dared not go below, the intangible bulk of a hovering dirigible.

"Zeppelin?" gasped Babette, the wind

whipping spray into her face, though it was muffled with fur.

The major shook his head. A quarter of an hour later a shadow came out of the darkness like an umbrella opened in a man's face, veered, and swept away. Babette gave a cry, and clutched the major's arm. The zigzagging boat, darting this way and that like a frightened rabbit, rose on the choppy waves, plunged in the trough, shook, staggered, raced, drenched with the cold seas, shaken by the gusty wind.

Dreadful sounds came from the passengers below. Mrs. Roberts, who was paying for her orgy with more than remorse, was in her cabin in a state of alternate convulsions and collapse; but so also seemed every one else below decks. Upon the deck, in sheltered nooks and crannies, clinging with numbed hands to rails and stanchions like clumps of seaweed, were inert battered figures. Only a few seasoned travelers stood swaying on the reeling, sliding deck.

It seemed impossible to Babette that the little vessel could make the passage.

"Will—will we ever reach Portsmouth?" she moaned.

"In a few hours," said the major huskily but cheerfully.

"But isn't it a—a *terrible* storm?"

Staggering, the major guided her with a degree of difficulty that was rather pleasant for him to the head of the companionway. He pointed down into the dining saloon. Babette caught a glimpse of a red-faced, uncouth British officer, with the greyhound on his tunic, bent over the table, literally gorging red ham, German-fried potatoes, and bottles of stout, while two sardonic waiters stood near him, carelessly balancing themselves with hands lightly touching the backs of the chairs, laughing at the banter he flung over his shoulder between hasty mouthfuls.

"Ugh!" said Babette with a stifled grunt.

"You see," said the major, "it's an old story to those fellows! The sky's not even clouded over; there'll be a moon before we get in. Do you feel badly?"

"Awful!"

"Do you think it would do you any good to go below and lie down a bit?"

"No!" After a moment's silence, as they lurched wildly out on deck once more, she added: "I'm not really sick. It's the wildness of it. It seems so hopeless. I—I'm afraid I'm a bit scared—muddled. My head aches. Do you suppose there really are submarines out there?"

"Why, yes! War's still going on, you know."

"Oh, will it ever end!"

"Very soon!"

She was pressing unconsciously close to him for support and warmth, sheltering behind his bulk from the cold, shocking blasts of wind. He passed his arm about her instinctively, without the slightest sentimental intent. But as they stood there together, clinging to one another as it were, while the drunken little craft lifted them up dizzily, dropped them down sickeningly in the dark welter of the cold seas, they fell into a silence, both struck by the same thought. The world would never be the same again!

As the hours crept by, Babette began to sag wearily against the major. It was impossible to keep up an animated conversation. Those who remember that past age will recall that people seldom talked about themselves. Conversation was mostly of food, fuel, the daily communiqué, the latest shows, industrial strikes, and the morals of the time. But emotions were terribly sudden and strong and terribly responsive.

The major found a small iron bench in the lee of a ventilator, and here they braced themselves against the whipping roll, protected somewhat from the spray that was flung at them like bursts of shrapnel. Huddled against her protector's shoulder, Babette closed her eyes and slipped into a troubled sleep. There they sat for at least an hour, the major not daring to move for fear of disturbing the exhausted girl; the girl nestled cozily in her furs, her chilly discomfort giving place to a delicious sleepiness and warmth. Languor and the comforting arms about her dispelled her terror of the dark.

FOR the major, however, the situation was not quite so comfortable. The night and the heaving of the sea meant little to him, and he was thoroughly inured to the perils of darkness; but he began to realize that he was under a terrific nervous tension.

Babette's head was pressed against his shoulder in a way that suggested surrender and trust. He trembled at the idea. Every nerve in his body began to tingle. Even in the darkness, her upturned face was so close to his that he could study every line, every shadow. The sweep of her lashes made bluish pools on her face; a strand of hair escaping from the fur toque lay dankly on her waxy forehead; her lips, pale as coral, were dry with salt, and as he looked at them, wondering, her little tongue stole out and moistened them. He was in an extraordinary position for a man—able to admire a lovely face intimately and at leisure!

In a sense he was actually embracing the girl, thrilling delightfully at the contact, while she apparently was as innocently unaware of his arms, except for their comforting protection, as a good-tempered baby rocked into slumber is unaware of the arms of its mother convulsively pressing it to her heart. But Babette was no baby! The major knew women fairly well, and he could see in her face, veiled by the shadows, stung by the spray, all the romantic passion and sustaining idealism of beautiful and healthy young womanhood. As he continued to look at her, all at once he was trapped. His brain took fire. He had no more power to prevent himself from bending his head slowly until his lips touched hers than he had to halt the ship as it plunged down the sloping sea. There was only one horrifying, restraining thought; he must not awaken her!

That kiss was intended to be the faintest caress—hardly more than a breath against her parted lips. But he no sooner touched her than he lost his head completely, crushing her mouth and face with all the devastating fervor of a man madly in love—as he was, in most solemn truth, madly in love, instantly, completely, eternally!

Had Babette awakened to the kiss it is hard to imagine how it might have affected her; but she was struck simultaneously by a greater physical shock—the cold shock of a wave that swept over the forequarter, crashing against the ventilator and drenching them both with the spray. There was a moment's danger of being washed overboard. The major managed desperately to grasp a stanchion with one arm and hold on to Babette with the other until the ship shook itself free and rose skittishly to meet the next wave.

"Oh! Oh! I'm drenched!" gasped Babette. "What a way to wake up!"

"You'll have to go below," said the major hoarsely, not daring to look at her. Was it possible that she was aware of what he had done? What a caddish trick! But *wallay!* How wonderful!

As they parted at the head of the companionway, not a word was said. Each seemed to be consciously avoiding the other's glance. Yet at the last moment their eyes did meet in a swift flashing look, as if each were trying to divine the other's thoughts—fearful, hopeful, defiant, yet secretly both in a state of hopeless infatuation!

All at once the ship came into calm waters, darting forward like some swift-moving bird. Despite the even keel, Babette descended to her cabin drunkenly, feeling that the world was still reeling under her; and the major, once more on deck, gazing at the pale aurora of searchlights that shimmered over Portsmouth, gripped the rail with a cramping grasp, desperately striving to steady himself.

It was bright dawn before the passengers were permitted ashore, and it was after breakfast when Babette and the major saw each other again.

Mrs. Roberts descended the gangway in a condition that completely belied the description of her physical characteristics entered upon her passport. Had any one in that inauspicious moment mentioned the excellence of the cuisine at the Normandie to her, it is quite likely that her eyes would have rolled back fishily in their sockets while the good lady collapsed in a quivering lump upon the spot. Babette, therefore, was relieved from the delicious torment of her own private emotions, by the querulous demands of her dejected aunt. She could not leave her aunt's side.

The major found sufficient excuse for again taking charge of the affairs of Mrs. Roberts and her niece. He followed them about muttering advice, directing porters, enlisting the aid of the red-caps, feeling very rocky and diffident in his attitude toward Babette.

AT THE barriers they were obliged to go their separate ways, through all the devious, irritating, delaying obstacles that a resourceful government could set in order deliberately to discourage travel. The major was delayed by a dispatch that was waiting for him. The red-caps, in the meantime, assuming that he and Babette were husband and wife returning from leave together, very thoughtfully took them personally in hand, finding a separate compartment for them, until they were suddenly confounded by the staggering presence of Mrs. Roberts, whereupon they retired with discreet grins. But there was no grin on the face of the major.

His dispatch directed him definitely to remain in Portsmouth until he received orders to proceed.

His cheek-bones showed white with rage and disappointment and his eyes were shadowy with pain and disappointment as he explained to Babette and her aunt that he could not proceed to London with them. Babette struggled for a calm breath. Mrs. Roberts stared at him with the speechless apathy of one slowly reviving after a bad spell of seasickness.

"But couldn't you return from London on the next train?" suggested Babette impulsively.

"No. If I had time to get around to headquarters, I might be able to fix it up. But this is a boat-train, you see. It's leaving immediately. I—I haven't got a chance—" All at once, under his breath, he gave a furious curse. The guards were tooting their whistles!

"Well, write us when you are coming up to London! Don't forget! We'll be stopping at the Ritz." Babette fumbled hurriedly in her bag. "Here's a card. If you miss us in London, won't you drop me a line to America? You will? Please!"

The windows of the low carriages were filled with heads, calling, laughing, staring, and with stiffly extended arms which seemed to have a hypnotic influence on the slack-kneed porters who shuffled along beside the slowly moving train. The major began to walk beside Babette's window, filled with an almost uncontrollable desire to wrench open the door and clamber in beside her, yet forced by the most inflexible law to stand aside and watch her whirl away out of his life. He was speechless. Though he held her hand, resting on the window-sill, he could think of nothing to say.

"You will?" she repeated, looking at him with an expression that brought his heart into his throat.

"I will follow you!" he exclaimed. "I'll follow you! Wherever you go, I'll find you!"

People were clamoring on all sides; Mrs. Roberts was looking at him with dull listlessness; the train was gathering speed. An opportunity had passed! Stepping back dazedly, the major saluted and watched the train pass away.

Within the compartment Mrs. Roberts was saying dully to her niece:

"But, my dear, you don't even know his name!"

"His name!" cried Babette, rising to her feet, startled, terrified, with the palm of her hand pressed against her mouth. Then, remembering, she relaxed with an expression of extraordinary sweetness on her face, holding her hands on her bosom to stifle the tumult there. "It makes no difference! He knows mine! He knows mine!"

AFTER the train had disappeared, before moving away, the major looked at the card Babette had handed him. Five minutes later, he was still in the same attitude, sometimes looking at the card, sometimes lifting his eyes to gaze along the track with a sick expression. How long he might have remained in this position, it is hard to judge; but one of the red-caps became a little anxious at the curious conduct of the American officer, and feeling that an offer of advice would not be taken amiss, he approached and saluted.

"Is there anything I can do, sir?" said the red-cap respectfully.

A galvanic shock seemed to pass through the American, bringing him out of his coma with a start.

"*Honi wau, wiki-wiki! Honi wau, wiki-wiki!*" he shouted. Executing a beautiful salute with his stick, he brought the point opposite the astounded soldier's chest, made a fierce pretense at spitting him, returned the stick to its pretended scabbard, and whirling on his heel, walked away shouting with laughter, almost hysterically.

"What's the matter with that bloke?" said an interested porter.

"He's an American!" murmured the red-cap.

"Or shell-shocked!" said both together, as they watched Bobs break into a run for the telegraph office.

The Soul *of* Caliban

An Answer Out of the North Woods to Those Misguided Humans Who Say That Animals Have No Souls

By Emma-Lindsay Squier

FROM French Louie I had this story, which you will accept as true or scout as impossible, according to your liking and knowledge of dogs. For myself, I think it is true, for he was not blessed—or cursed—with imagination.

French Louie is a curious mixture of savagery and simplicity. For many years he lived by trapping in the northern woods. And yet, despite his cruel occupation, he has always loved animals. Many a fox cub he has reared to adulthood when it came to grief in his traps. Many a tear has he shed—I can well believe it—when a dragged and bloody trap told the mute story of an animal's desperate gnawing of a foot or a leg as the price of freedom. One day when he heard a visitor to the menagerie remark that it was a pity that animals had no souls, he flew into a rage, fairly booted the visitor out of the place, and was still sputtering French and English when I dropped in upon him.

"No souls, they say!" he snorted, spreading his hands and puckering his lips in contemptuous mimicry. "Faugh! They give me the gran' pain! The only animal they ever have, I bet you, he is a canary bird that say 'Pretty Poll,' all day long!"

"That's a parrot," I said mildly. But he only snorted.

"No soul, they say! Listen, I tell you somet'ing I bet you nobody believe, by Gar! Or they say, 'Oh, dat dog he obey hees instinct.' *Bien*, all I say ees, who know what ees instinct and what ees soul? And I bet you many a man he ain't got the soul that that dog got instinct—no, by Gar!"

It was in the sheep country of Alberta that Louie knew the dog, Caliban. Leon Surprenon was his owner, and Louie used to visit the sheep man at his ranch, far removed from civilization.

"Leon he was one fine educated man, by Gar," he told me. "Books—with pictures—he had many of them in hees 'ouse. Dat dog, Caliban, he name' heem from a pleh by Shekespeare—you have heard of heem?"

"Yes," I said, unsmiling.

"You know a pleh with a dog name' Caliban in eet?"

"Not a dog," I answered, "but a poor imprisoned monster, ugly, deformed, and very wicked, yet somehow very pitiful."

French Louie nodded vigorously.

"*C'est la même chose*," he assured me. "Dat dog, Caliban—oh, *mon Dieu*, he was ogly! Hees lip she always lifted up like zis—in a snar-rl—all the time dat lip! And hees eyes—leetle, mean-looking eyes, wid a frown between dem always, and teeth dat would snep together—*clop!* No tramps ever came near the place of Leon Surprenon. Dey knew dat dog, Caliban; he was not a beast to be trifle' with."

"What kind of a dog was he?" I asked of Louie the Frenchman.

He shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands and shook his head. No kind, and every kind, was what I gathered from his description—a big, shaggy dog, as large as a sheep dog, and much more stockily built. His hair had no silky smoothness to it. Rather it was like the rough, matted fur of a wolf—and Louie maintained that Caliban had wolf blood in him. There was a strain of bulldog, too, that made his legs short and bowed a bit. His under jaw came out pugnaciously—always with that lifted lip which was no fault of his, but which gave his face a perpetually savage expression.

Ugly he must have been; yet useful, too. As a guard against tramps and the lawless characters who are to be found in any part of the country where civilization is at a distance, he was invaluable. As a sheep dog, too, he had not his equal in Alberta. Perhaps it is too much to say that he could count the sheep his master owned. But true it is that he would watch them, passing into the big corrals, his sharp, shaggy ears pointed, his small, close-set eyes never wavering in their intense regard, his whole body taut with concentration. And if any lingered, or did not come, Caliban would need no word of command to stir him to action. Like an arrow he would dart out, snapping at the lagging heels, turning in a scatter-brained ewe, or dashing off across the fields to find a sheep which he knew had strayed or had fallen into the river.

A DOG of strange, tumultuous jealousies, and incomprehensible tenderness. So rough was he, when herding the sheep, that Leon Surprenon was always shouting: "Caliban, you devil! Stop biting that sheep or I'll beat your ugly brains out!"

Caliban would stop short, regard his master with a long, disdainful stare, and then look back at the sheep, as if to say: "Those silly things! What difference does it make whether I bite their heels or not?"

And yet—that was the dog that, after seeing the sheep into the corral one winter afternoon when a blizzard was threatening to blow down from the north, did not come into the house to dream and twitch under the kitchen stove, as was his custom. When darkness fell Leon noticed the dog's absence at first with unconcern, and then with growing uneasiness. The rising wind flung itself viciously upon doors and windows, the white snow whirled up against the panes with sharp, sibilant flurries. Leon went to the door and called. The blizzard drove his voice back in his throat; the wind hurled him against the portals, and drove an icy blast of snow into the hall.

Leon Surprenon was not the man to be daunted by a storm. He remembered that after the gates were shut, Caliban had stood steadily gazing away toward the dim fields, where the menacing curtain of oncoming wind and snow was blotting out the contours of stream and distant forest.

So he took a lantern and fought his way out into the terrible night, out toward the sheep corrals, and then out toward the invisible fields beyond the stream. A mile he went—perhaps more—fighting his way against the fury of the storm. It was out by the cluster of pine trees that marks the east line of the ranch that he met Caliban, coming home.

The dim light of the lantern threw a weak golden circle against the driving white mistiness of the snow. And into the nebulous ring of light came Caliban, grim, staggering, a grotesque monster looming out of the white darkness, his mouth strangely misshapen by something he was carrying—*a lamb*, newly born. Beside him, struggling weakly yet valiantly against the driving snow, came the mother sheep, which had given birth to her baby in the midst of the dreadful blizzard. Caliban was coming slowly, adapting his pace to hers, stopping when she would stop, yet with unmistakable signs that he expected her to struggle forward with him. And the lamb—the weak, bleating little thing swung from his teeth as lightly as if it had been a puff of thistledown.

Now the dog Caliban never begged for caresses. He was not the sort of dog to leap and bark and wag his tail when the master came home. Between him and Leon Surprenon there was an understanding—a man's understanding—of mutual respect and restraint. A word of commendation sufficed him, or sometimes a pat on the head. But never, as long as Leon had owned the dog, could he recall a time when Caliban had ever sought to ingratiate himself by being friendly and playful, as the other dogs would do.

Nevertheless, Caliban had his jealousies, fierce, deep and primitive. He killed a dog that Leon petted casually; he took it by the throat and crushed it with his great teeth, then flung the quivering body down and stared at it with those baleful close-set eyes. There was blood on the perpetual snarl of his lifted lip.

Then fearlessly he awaited his punishment. Leon beat him, cruelly. But Caliban never flinched or whimpered, just stood there hunching himself up and shutting his eyes, licking his lips a bit as the blows hurt him more and more. When it was over, he shook himself, stretched, then pricked up his ears and looked Leon in the face, as if to say: "Well, that's over. Now have you any orders?" If he had whimpered once—but he did not. Leon swore furiously, and had the dead dog buried in the meadow. He did not caress the other dogs after that. They were valuable to him—but Caliban was priceless. And Leon knew that the only way of breaking his stubborn spirit would be to kill him.

CALIBAN had one abiding hatred: cats. Whereas the other dogs chased them joyously, or ignored them as inferior creatures, Caliban loathed them, chased them savagely, killed them mercilessly. He had a short, brutal way of doing it; if he caught a luckless cat—and he could run like a yearling buck, that dog Caliban—he would give it one shake, like the crack of a whip, and then toss the cat into the air. It usually died with a broken neck and a broken back. And by the law of the survival of the fittest, the cats that escaped from Caliban's savage sallies were wise in their generation and kept out of his way.

But there was one small cat, not yet out of kittenhood, that had either come recently to the ranch, or else by an accident had not crossed Caliban's path—a gentle little cat, all gray, with a white paw which she was always licking as if proud of it.

One day she sat sunning herself on the porch before the house. Caliban came by that way, and saw her.

With the savage, deep-throated growl that the other cats had learned to fear as the most deadly thing of life, he leaped at her, caught her, flung her up into the air.

Perhaps it was her supreme ignorance of danger that saved her from death. For the gentle little cat had not tried to run from the oncoming whirlwind of teeth and gleaming eyes. She lay where Caliban had flung her, dazed, inert, staring at the terrible dog, with round, uncomprehending eyes. He saw that he had not killed her. He came nearer, ready to shake her with the peculiarly deadly twist that he knew so well. Still she did not move. She could not. She only mewed, a very small, pitiful mew, and her stunned body twitched a little.

Caliban hesitated, sniffed at her, turned away. After all, he seemed to tell himself, you could not kill a weak, helpless thing like that—a thing that could not run.

Leon Surprenon came out and found the little cat. He took her up very gently, and she tried to purr as he stroked her quivering, hurt body.

"Caliban," said Leon sternly, "that was not a sportsmanlike thing to do. I am ashamed of you!"

And to his great surprise, Caliban, the insolent, the ever-snarling, put his tail between his legs and slunk down the porch steps. He too was ashamed.

But Caliban, that ugly, misshapen dog with the perpetual snarl on his lifted lip, could make amends. And to the best of his ability he did it. The gentle little cat did not die, but never did she fully recover the use of her limbs. She had a slow, halting way of walking, and running was an impossibility. She would have been an easy prey for the joyous, roistering dogs that chased cats not from enmity, but because it was the proper thing to do. But Caliban stood between her and eager, sniffing dogs like a savage, sinister warrior. Too well did the other ranch dogs know the menace of those close-set eyes, the ugly, undershot jaw, and the snarl that showed the glitter of deadly, clamping teeth. They learned—through experience—that the little gray cat was not to be molested.

Not only did Caliban become the little gray cat's protector; he became her friend. She would sit on the fence and watch for the sheep dogs to come up to the house after the day's work was done. When the other dogs filed past her, she paid no attention, realizing perfectly that they dared not harm her. And when Caliban came, close at the heels of Leon Surprenon, she would yawn and stretch, purr loudly, and drop squarely and lightly on the big dog's back. He would carry her gravely into the kitchen, lie down while she got slowly off his back, and would lie under the stove, with the little cat purring and rubbing about his face. It was not in him to show affection. But he permitted her carefully to wash his face and ears, tug at burs that matted his heavy coat, and to sleep between his forefeet.

Once another cat, emboldened by the gray cat's immunity from danger, went to sleep between Caliban's great paws. When he awoke and found the intruder peacefully purring against his chest, he gave one terrific growl, sprang to his feet, seized the strange

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cat and shook it. Savagely he flung it across the room. It was dead before ever it struck the floor.

Now it was at this time that Leon Surprenon married Amelie Morin, from Dubiqui, and brought her to the ranch that was bounded by dark forests and deep, turbulent rivers. She chafed a little under the isolation of the place, and shivered when at night the wolves howled far back on the distant slopes. But she loved Leon Surprenon, and in time became reconciled to the loneliness of the ranch—still more reconciled when a baby boy was born to her, and was strong and healthy and beautiful.

CALIBAN had accepted the girl, Amelie, stoically, without apparent resentment. It was as if he knew that sooner or later his master would bring home a woman to share the lonely ranch house. But the baby—that was a different thing. He had not bargained on the small intruder who became at once the lord and tyrant of the household. When Leon took up the tiny baby in his arms, Caliban growled, and his eyes became a baleful red.

When Leon put the baby in its crib, and spoke to it foolishly, fondly, as all fathers do, Caliban came and stood beside him, looking down at the red-faced, crinkly-eyed baby; and again the dog growled, deep in his throat.

One day when Leon caressed the child, Caliban sprang, trying to tear the infant out of his arms. Leon knocked the dog furiously aside, and beat him with a leather whip.

"Caliban, you devil!" he panted between blows. "If you ever touch that baby, I'll kill you!"

And as if the dog understood, he hunched himself and shut his eyes, licking his lips as the heavy lash fell again and again. Then he shook himself, stared at his master with somber, unwavering eyes, and went out of the house without once looking back.

For a whole week he did not return. One of the ranchmen reported that he had seen Caliban in the forest, that the dog had mated with a female wolf.

Leon Surprenon said that it was not true, and that Caliban would come back. But Amelie cried out:

"No, no! That dog he is a monster! Never again would I feel that my baby was safe!"

"You misjudge him," Leon said soothingly, "he is a little jealous of the baby, it is true, but he will overcome that in time. An ugly-looking dog, I grant you, but he is very gentle, nevertheless."

"*Gentle*—that beast!" The girl shut her eyes and shuddered.

Caliban did come back. He appeared at the kitchen door one day when Leon was out looking after the sheep—sullen, defiant, his glittering, close-set eyes seeming to question whether or not he would be welcomed. The perpetual snarl on his lifted lip, and the misshapen ugliness of his powerful body made him ever more repellent to the girl Amelie, who snatched up her baby from where he was playing on the floor, ran with him to the bedroom, and closed and bolted the door. But a royal welcome he received from the little gray cat, that dragged herself toward him with purring sounds of joy. She mewed delightedly, rubbed against his bowed legs, and tried to lick his face. And Caliban, for the first and last time, bent his ugly head, and licked the little gray cat, briefly and furtively.

The dog had learned his lesson as to the status of the baby. And whether or not his heart was seared with that savage primitive jealousy which he had shown at first so plainly, no hint of it now appeared. At first he ignored the child, even when it crawled toward him as he lay under the kitchen stove. Later he would watch the round-faced baby with rigid, attentive eyes—eyes in which there were blue-green wolf gleams behind the honest brown. Sometimes he would sniff at the child questioningly, as if trying to ascertain for himself what charm such a helpless crawling little animal could possibly have for the man who was his master and his idol.

Little by little Amelie's distrust of him lessened, and she was willing that the baby should lie in his crib on the sunny porch, when Caliban was stretched out on the steps with the little gray cat sleeping between his paws.

Then one day, after a morning of housework within doors, she came out to take the baby—and he was gone. The crib was empty, the little blankets were rumpled into confusion. The dog Caliban still lay sleeping upon the porch, and the little gray cat purred drowsily against his furry chest.

Amelie screamed, and the men came

running up from the sheep pens and the barns, snatching up sticks of wood, or fumbling with guns. Leon came running with a face the color of chalk; and Amelie clung to him, screaming, sobbing, wild with hysterical fear. She was certain that some wild animal had snatched her baby out of his crib and devoured him.

"Nonsense!" said Leon Surprenon positively. "No wild animal could come near the house with Caliban on guard."

After an hour of frantic searching, they found the child. Back of the ranch house where the garbage was dumped and burned, there they found the baby, playing happily with an old tin can, dirty and bedraggled, yet quite unhurt and unharmed.

IN THE first moment of acute relief, no one thought to question how the child had come so far. But afterward—

Leon stood in deep thought, staring down at Caliban, who returned his look steadily, unflinchingly, as was his wont. For the first time a doubt of the dog's integrity came into his mind. He knew Caliban's great strength, knew that the dog could have carried the baby as easily as he had carried the newborn lamb. And the garbage pile—there was a grim humor in that which pointed to Caliban's line of reasoning. Undesirable things were thrown out there; things put upon the garbage pile were never brought back into the house; therefore, if the baby were put out there, with the rest of the rubbish . . .

"Caliban, you devil!" said Leon Surprenon between clenched teeth. Yet he could not beat the dog. The evidence was only circumstantial.

Had the thing happened to any one else's child, he would have laughed heartily at the story. But to him it was not so funny. Anything might have happened to the child. The dog might have dropped it; or stray wolves might have come down out of the woods. The baby might have cut its hands terribly on broken glass or rusty tin cans.

"Caliban," said Leon Surprenon sternly, "you have spoiled my belief in you. I will never be able to trust you again."

The great ugly dog stared at him with those glittering, close-set eyes, then turned away abruptly and lay down. It was as if he accepted the defeat of his plans, the humiliation, the loss of his master's trust with stoical resignation. It was almost as if he had shrugged his shoulders.

Now there came the winter time—a lean, terrible winter, when the wolves howled about the ranch, sometimes becoming so bold as to come close to the barns, and corrals, and the house. The spring was late, and even when the snow began to melt, and the first warm breezes to come up from the south, still the howling of the wolf pack was heard on the distant hills, and still tracks were found in the crusted snow about the barn and the sheep corrals.

One day in the spring an urgent message came to Amelie Surprenon, begging her to come to a neighboring ranch where a woman lay in childbirth.

She could only go on horseback—and the need for her help was imminent. She saddled her horse herself, for the men were out on the ranges. Then she hesitated as to leaving or taking the baby. But Leon had said he would return at noon, and the sun was then almost at the zenith. She scribbled a note for him, put the baby in the bedroom in the little pen which Leon had made for it, and shut the door.

Then she mounted her horse and rode hard and fast to the woman who was in need of her.

Leon Surprenon did not get the note. A hint of spring sickness had come upon some of the sheep, and he worked all through the morning and late into the afternoon with sheep dip and sprays. When he was about to return to the ranch house, one of the men told him that he had seen Amelie riding by, at noon, in the direction of the Pourers' ranch. Leon frowned a bit. He did not like to have Amelie ride alone, especially on the forest roads. He flung himself upon his horse, shouted to the men to go on with their work, and took a short cut across the fields to ride home with Amelie.

He met her just as she came out of the door, tired, but smiling.

"Such a sweet little baby boy!" she called to Leon as he rode nearer. Then her face clouded suddenly.

"The baby—our baby—" she said uncertainly. "You did not leave him alone?"

Leon stared back at her, his forehead wrinkled.

"The baby?" he repeated. "Why, surely, Amelia, he is with you?"

For an instant she did not reply. A slow fear was dawning in her heart that stretched her eyes wide and made them hard and glassy.

"No—no," she almost whispered. "I left a note—I thought you would come home at noon. The baby then—he is there alone—perhaps with—*Caliban*—" Her voice died away, as if she were afraid of the name she had spoken.

LEON tried to laugh, to make light of her fears. But his lips were a bit stiff, and he breathed hard as he helped her into the saddle.

"Come, come, Amelie, you worry too much. The little one will be quite well—you shall see—only very hungry perhaps and exercising his small lungs terrifically. As for Caliban—"

Amelie slashed at her horse's flank with a whip. Her face was dead-white.

"Where was that dog—that terrible beast, when you came away?" she gasped as they galloped down the snowy road.

"I don't know," Leon jerked out grimly, as if thinking aloud. "I can't remember seeing him—yes, yes, he stood looking away toward the ranch house; I remember now, that he barked once—then trotted away. I thought he was rounding up a sheep. I did not call him back. One of the men laughed and said that he was going to meet the lady—"

"*Wolf!*" the girl finished hoarsely. "O *grand Dieu*, guard my baby! He is in danger, I tell you, Leon; I feel it, I know it! That beast—that horrible beast who mates with bloodthirsty wolves—you would not believe it, Leon, but I tell you it is true—true! Oh, my baby, my little baby!"

She lashed her horse with frenzied, hysterical hands, and the startled animal reared and plunged forward. Fast, faster, the slender hoofs pounded through the snowy slush of the road, and Leon's horse followed, breathing hard and straining at the bit.

They did not speak again, the husband and wife, but rode, rode as if for the saving of a life.

It was Amelie who dismounted first, when at the end of that wild ride her horse came to a stop, panting and trembling. She dashed the unlocked door wide open, and an instant later a wild scream sent the blood ebbing from Leon's face and made his hands numb clods of flesh as they fumbled for the gun in his belt.

The scene he saw as he stumbled through the hallway turned him sick with a deadly nausea of horror and despair.

Amelie lay fainting in the open doorway of the bedroom. Beyond, an empty cradle, an open window, with muddy tracks on the sill, told a dreadful story. But the thing that made him cry out, savagely, hoarsely, was the dog—Caliban. The snarling, misshapen beast stood in the doorway, staring at him with red, malevolent eyes—*and there was blood on the heavy jowls and the thick matted hair of the chest.*

"You—you devil!" Leon screamed like a madman—and fired.

The dog still stood there, just an instant. The small, close-set eyes blinked slightly, the ugly head jerked back once—and he fell in a silent, twitching heap.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" Leon was sobbing, hardly knowing what he said or did. And then—he heard a baby crying.

Stunned, incredulous, almost believing himself in a tortured dream, the man went slowly forward. The baby lay behind the door, lay there where it had been dragged to safety. It was crying with fright and hunger, beating the air vaguely with its pink little hands. And over by the dresser, in a pool of blood—lay a dead wolf.

"THERE is a grave on the ranch of Leon Surprenon," said French Louie solemnly, in the language of his people, "where the dog, Caliban, lies buried. And above it is a tombstone of marble—yes, the whitest of marble—with this inscription:

> Here lies Caliban, a dog. He died as he lived, misjudged, maligned, yet unafraid. In life he never failed in duty, and in death he was faithful to his trust.

"And dat is why," said Louie, the Frenchman, lapsing into the argot of his daily life, "dat I get so mad inside of me when people say animals dey have no souls. Did not the dog, Caliban, have a soul? Oh, *mon Dieu!* I know dis: when he died dat day, and hees spirit went out of hees big, ogly body and rose up to the skies, the good Saint who guards the gates up dere he look out, and say: 'Why, Caliban, ees dat you? Come in, *mon brave*. I did not know you. How beautiful you have grown!' "

A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Valley of Humility

You Will Appreciate How Easy Life Is for Most of Us When You Read This Tense Drama of an Ex-Convict's Fight to Rehabilitate Himself with the World—and His Wife

By Jack Bethea

Illustrations by Ralph Pallen Coleman

ALMOST at the steps of the tiny clapboard house lay the broad band of the Warrior Highway, leading away through the vista of close-standing trees and glimpsed in winding curves up the mountain under which the cabin nestled.

It was April, and under the soft breezes and clear southern skies the oaks were just beginning to feather into green, while the pines, panoplied in new needles, were throwing checkered shadows across the road that lay mottled under the low-hanging sun.

Across the highway wandered a toy railroad that disappeared into the dim interior of an eight-foot opening into the shoulder of the bluff that reared its red-clay banks along one side of the road chiseled out of the side of the overhanging rock.

This opening was framed in timbers that held back the shale, supporting the roof and making the passageway safe. Across the road from the mine reared a mound of coal, as if spewed out of the gash on the hillside. Beside the coal stood a mine car that had just discharged its cargo and was now waiting to be trundled back into the dark tunnel to be filled again in never-ending routine.

In the little house, from which came the savory odor of frying bacon, a woman was singing—crooning a minor refrain with a recurring cadence. Presently she came to the open door and stood gazing out, her eyes filled with the splendor of the golden half-light that bathed the trees in a translucent, ethereal sheen.

Motionless alongside a giant pine, a shabbily dressed man watched her. He had waited for this moment, standing patient and motionless minute after minute, his eyes fixed on the door. His face lighted faintly when the woman appeared, but he did not stir and she did not observe him.

His suit of cheap blue serge did not fit; a wrinkled cloth cap was tucked under his arm and he wore a blue denim shirt without collar or tie; his shoes were brogans. His face was eloquent—long and thin and ascetic, with deep lines drawn down the cheeks beside the wide mouth, making the chin seem longer still. The idle breeze stirred the hair from his high forehead, where silver belied the virility of the man's body. The steady gray eyes held no hint of age.

Impassively he watched the woman, and she, in the door, seemed immersed in her thoughts. The silence of the tiny clearing was a tangible thing, so fragile that it would have been shattered by any sound less harmonious than the mating call of a whippoorwill that voiced its mournful plea far back in the hills. Almost hypnotized by the eerie stillness, the woman turned her head and seemed to be listening for some elfin call, some pipes of Pan dim-sounding in the green-mantled glades.

The man's heart beat a trifle faster. Surely she must realize his nearness and turn! But the woman's eyes were on the mine opening, where the rumble of a car presently broke the spell.

Three men smeared and covered with muck and dust emerged blinking into the twilight. At their caps burned carbide lights that flickered and grew sickly in the outside air. Laboriously the three pushed the car before them across the road and there, with the help of crowbar and lever, dumped its freight to add to the pile. Then the woman in the door spoke incisively, her voice high and calm with a consciousness of dominance.

"You boys better come early in the morning," she said. "The trucks will be here by six and we start loading. I've sold the whole pile."

The youngest of the three looked up, and in the soot that covered his face his teeth suddenly appeared as he smiled. "Fourteen tons today, Mis' Drew," he said. "Ain't bad for three of us. We'll be here early."

Swinging huge tin dinner-pails, the three turned away and disappeared down a path toward the valley. As Jean Drew's eyes followed them, her gaze swung toward the tree where the man stood and she saw him.

HE CAME slowly out of the shadows to the edge of the porch and gazed up at her. There was a faint expectancy in his manner, a wistful hope as he stood with his eyes on hers. She looked at him and so they stood until at last she spoke:

"So you have come back."

The man laid both hands palm down on the boards before him. "Yes, I have come back," he assented. His voice was deep and he spoke slowly, his words echoing against the murmur of the forest. She made no move of welcome and again there was silence. This time it was he who broke it.

"Is that all you have to say?"

The woman maintained her statuesque pose in the door. Behind her, the red blaze from the open grate played in mellow shadows about the walls and outlined her figure. There was something unyielding in her attitude, and the expectancy died out of his manner. But still he stood with wide eyes on her and waited.

The woman's tone was hostile when she voiced another question: "Why did you come here?"

The man gestured vaguely. "I—I don't know. I guess—I guess—it was because I had nowhere else to go."

Another space of silence. She still stood unyielding and the man seemed to droop. Again she asked a question:

"When did you get out?"

"Yesterday."

"I didn't think your sentence was up for six months."

He explained simply. "That was my allowance for good behavior."

"And you came here?" There was surprise in her tone, and he answered defensively.

"When I—I found out where you were, I—I asked in Attapulgas. They didn't recognize me. Five years—down there and—and one is forgotten quickly."

"I have not forgotten!" Her tone was suddenly bitter and he bowed his head.

"I did not suppose that you would. Perhaps that is why I came."

"To remind me? I should think you would want me to forget."

The man sighed. He had not expected a welcome; but this unyielding hostility—The explanations and pledges with which he had hurried north from the state prison at Hamilton halted on his tongue.

"I—I didn't mean to bring unpleasant memories. I—I wondered what—the years had done to you; how you were living. I—I thought perhaps you might—might—"

He broke off as his nostrils were assailed by the crisp odor of bacon from within. He had walked the fifteen miles from Attapulgas and food—there had been no money for that after his ticket . . He passed his tongue over dry lips and waited. The woman still regarded him stonily. Her voice was challenging.

"Now that you are here, what do you want?"

"Nothing—I guess. I was mistaken." His hand trembled slightly as he put on the garish cap. "I—I won't bother you. I'll be going."

He turned away, but she checked him. "Where are you going?"

"Back to Attapulgas."

"But there is no bus tonight—not until morning."

He smiled faintly. "I can walk. I walked out." But he did not go, and after a moment the woman spoke shortly.

"You can't walk fifteen miles tonight and without food." She moved aside grudgingly. "Come in and I will feed you. You can stay here tonight." She smiled, but there was no mirth in her face. "There are no neighbors to talk and, besides, you are my husband."

The man came back slowly. Ungracious as was the invitation, Bradley Drew accepted it. It postponed the time of parting from this woman. When one has waited five years for a moment—thought about it, dreamed about it, lived it, rehearsed it—to have it pass thus! Almost furtively he entered the small room.

It would have been bare but for the magic of a woman's touch. Cretonne curtains hung at the windows; here and there a picture relieved the board walls; there was a low chair before the fire, and a rocker. Through the door that opened into another room, he could see a table covered by a red cloth that glowed in the light from a shaded kerosene lamp.

The woman gestured toward the rocker. "Sit down," she said coldly. "I suppose you are tired. I will fix a place at the table for you."

BRADLEY DREW watched his wife through the door as she moved lightly from stove to table and back again. His thoughts went back to the last time they had dined together, before— He shook himself resolutely. He must not look back. Uninviting as the future seemed, it held more than the past. Presently his wife appeared in the door.

"Come in," she said briefly. "Supper is ready."

It was a simple meal: crisp bacon, cornbread pones browned to a turn, turnips, coffee. Bradley ate ravenously, hurriedly, with his eyes bent down, and silently. He was famished, but there was still a nicety about his handling of knife and fork.

His wife ate little and watched him, her eyes speculative, but abating none of their hostility. "Why do you eat like that?" she demanded suddenly.

He glanced up guiltily. "I—I forgot," he said. "In prison—down there, speaking is prohibited at meals. Habit—five years of it—it's pretty strong. If you speak—down there, they—"

"But if you can't speak, how do you ask for things?"

Again he explained. "Signal. If you want bread, you hold up a spoon and it is brought to you; meat, you hold up a knife; coffee, three fingers. Oh, it's a regular code. No talk—"

"And you ate five years like that!"

"We looked forward to meal time," he said simply. "It was the best hour of the day."

Again there was silence. She sat with her chin on her hands, and looked at him as he ate rapidly—and silently: no chink of knife against plate; no clatter of cup or saucer. It was silent, expeditious and effective. He ate prodigiously and she marveled.

"You didn't eat so much in the old days," she said curiously. "You must have been hungry."

"I was hungry."

"When did you eat last?"

"Yesterday morning, before I left—down there."

Jean Drew found his directness disconcerting. When she asked a question, he answered it in downright words—no evasion, no quibbling. Then he stopped speaking. As his meaning reached her, she spoke with more sympathy than she had yet shown.

"And you walked fifteen miles without food! Didn't they—they give you any money?"

"Five dollars—and this suit. I spent four dollars for a ticket to Attapulgas. Fifty cents went to find where you were. I—I telephoned. I couldn't go into offices. I have fifty cents. I saved it—for emergencies."

There was no irony in his voice—only a simple statement of fact. Jean seemed struck by a new thought.

"You came to me for money?" she questioned quickly.

"Is it likely I should?" he asked quietly. He crossed his knife and fork carefully in his plate, picked up the cup and saucer deftly and placed them in the platter, then sat erect, his hands folded on the table before him. He was silent as if waiting. Jean looked at him curiously.

"Why—" she began, when his shoulders

slumped. His voice was a little weary.

"Habit," he interrupted. "When you are through—down there, you do that."

Jean, her first surprise passed, was growing observant. She noticed now that always there was that little pause before he referred to the state penitentiary where he had spent five years.

Her husband sat up again and for the first time volunteered speech, harking back to her question.

"No, I didn't come to you for money. I—I took all your money. That's what I went—down there for." He smiled faintly. "I was—foolish. I—I thought you might need me. I came to help you if I could." He looked at her directly for the first time. Absently she saw the changes in his face—the deep lines down the thin cheeks, the aquiline nose now more cleanly outlined than ever, the long chin with the deep cleft in it. His eyes challenged her. "Amusing, was it not?"

Jean was incredulous. "You came to help me! After my part in—in—sending you there!"

Bradley sat curiously immobile. He spoke without movement, erect, his arms crossed over his chest; even his eyes were steadily in front of him.

"I'm not bitter. Your brother was right. I took your money and I—I suffered for it. I thought I was doing right; I thought you would vouch for the check to which I signed your name. I didn't realize then how little you cared for me or I wouldn't have done it. But I signed your name to a check and I lost your money. It was right that I should suffer. My only regret was that my suffering did not bring back your money."

LEANING forward, Jean looked at him. She was interested, for the first time since he had appeared wraithlike in the tiny clearing. It was late now. Outside, the crickets were calling shrilly, and now and then the basso complaint of a frog came up softly from the marshes along Little River.

"You can say that!" she cried incredulously. "After five years in prison!"

The lines about Bradley's mouth deepened. His voice was a little more vibrant, but his tone was still matter-of-fact.

"Prison does one of two things to a man: It brings him to himself, or it throws him into useless rebellion and breaks him. Only the pliant escape. You see, that was my salvation. I knew I had done wrong. I was willing to suffer the punishment. That I did not mean to do wrong detracted nothing from the justice of it. I made mistakes. I thought you cared for me. I thought you would approve what I did. I did not realize how your brother hated me or that he could influence you so greatly. I thought I could hold you against the world and it seemed to me that because I used your money for yourself, it was right. But I made mistakes and life has a way of not forgiving mistakes. So I paid for mine and in the long days—down there I decided to make my punishment as light as possible. Only the rebels have scars. I was not a rebel. I thought all this out. You have time for thought—down there. And so—"

Jean shivered. "You frighten me," she said. "It—it isn't human for you to feel as you do. You have some purpose in coming here. What do you want?"

"Nothing. I did not expect you to understand. Those who have not gone through the fire—"

"I did not escape!" she cried, and he bent his head.

"I know. Finding you here like this told me that. And you have not had time to think as I have."

They were silent. The flame of the lamp flickered up and smoked and Jean trimmed it with absent face. Impassive, his position unchanging, Bradley Drew watched her; when he spoke, his words came diffidently.

"Perhaps I did have a purpose in coming here."

Jean looked up in quick apprehension. His quietness—it was unnatural. Anger she could have understood. She had been bracing herself for that, five years. But this calm acquiescence in the justice of all that had happened—this matter-of-fact acceptance of his own terrible penalty! His purpose! What could it be? She looked at him.

"What is it?" she asked.

"To ask a question."

She threw out her hands in surprise; it was an anticlimax. "Ask it," she commanded.

He was in no hurry to speak. He was curiously quiet; not a gesture disturbed him; he spoke almost in a monotone. There was something oppressive in his very silence. It was heavy. Jean could not endure it.

"What did you wish to ask?"

"This: That day in court when I tried to explain, you drew away from me. Your brother said you were through, that a deputy sheriff in a moment would take me out of your life. I did not believe him. Those first days—down there, I waited for some word, some inquiry. It was months before I gave up. Why did you leave me to the hell of suspense for five years? Not a word, not a line, not a hint of what was happening to you. Did you hate me that much? Or was it your brother?"

It was her turn to pause. "It was I," she said finally.

Bradley rose quietly and picked up his cap. "I am satisfied. I'll be getting back now."

He walked to the door and looked back at her. His gray eyes were inscrutable. Habit—it clung to him; the long-followed routine governed every moment. Repression, that was what he had learned—down there. Five years of waiting—for this.

His hand was on the door when she spoke. "Where are you going?"

He gestured vaguely. "Attapulgas. Anywhere."

"You can't go tonight. You couldn't walk all the way to Attapulgas. It—it isn't safe."

"What then?"

"Stay here tonight. Tomorrow you can get a bus. I will—will give you the money."

Bradley tossed his cap on a chair. "Very well," he agreed briefly. "I can fix up a pallet before the fire in here."

JEAN DREW rose early the next morning. The light was just beginning to break into the east window when, fully dressed, she opened the door from her bedroom and stepped into the dining-room.

Bradley was up before her, however, and a fire blazed merrily in the wide fireplace. The April morning was chill and the blaze was grateful. The door into the kitchen was open and she heard his step from time to time. She stared about her curiously. The pallet on which he had slept was rolled up neatly and placed in a corner; the room had been swept and the curtains pulled back from the windows.

Jean was a little reluctant to go into the kitchen and face the man who had been her husband five years before, and whom she had long regarded as worse than dead so far as concerned any further part in her life. In the bitterness of the discovery of the loss of her own and her brother's money, she had vowed that never again would she think of him. Yet, underneath, she had known that sooner or later she must face the issue of their new relations when he was released from the prison to which her words had sent him.

She was puzzled at his attitude. All night she had thought of it, and she was no nearer a solution now than she had been when she unaccountably relented and brought him into the house to feed him. She wondered that she should have done that. But there had been something forlorn about him, as he stood uncomplainingly at the foot of the steps and looked up at her. The memory of his trim figure in the days when the condition of his fingers had been a matter of importance to him, made his present clothes seem pathetic.

She was curiously unsettled. She tried to revive some of the hot bitterness that had filled her when she sat on the witness stand and convicted him of a forgery that had swallowed up her fortune, her brother's and Bradley's own. She tried to be bitter, but she couldn't. Somehow, the memory of that quiet figure, standing uncomplainingly at the foot of the steps and looking up at her with the gray eyes that were the same and yet were not the same—that had unplumbed depths in them now—something of the pathos of the way of the cross he had traveled reached her and she could not hate him.

Indifferent! That was it. She was indifferent to him! In a burst of magnanimity, she was even a little sorry for him, but she was more sorry for herself. He had condemned her to this—and she looked about the cozy little room with sudden distaste. This ghost from her past stirred feelings that she had thought were long dead. But the embers were covered—not smothered. In the years of her life at the Chinquapin, she had taught herself to accept the inevitable and had resolutely refused to allow her thoughts to turn to the past. But this—this shabbily dressed figure in the ill-fitting blue clothes opened every grave and the what-might-have-been gibbered at her.

She stooped and held her fingers to the blaze; and as she did so, Bradley Drew appeared in the open door to the dining-room. He was just as she had seen him last night, quiet—oh, very quiet—subdued, moving noiselessly, with a minimum of motion, and speaking in the same even-timbred voice.

"Breakfast is ready," he said.

Jean's eyebrows went up. "You made yourself at home."

"Yes, I did not think it necessary to disturb you."

Jean did not comment aloud, but her eyes swept the table with keen interest: biscuits turned with the brown side invitingly toward her; crisp ham; an egg staring at her out of one eye. On the stove a coffee-pot spouted a geyser of steam.

INVOLUNTARILY she gasped. Bradley Drew cooking! Like this! Where—how— Her thoughts were incoherent as she remembered the stately dinners in the huge dining-room of their old home on Highland Avenue with Hawkins in quiet deference at the elbow of the master of the house. That master had been Bradley Drew! Could it be the same man who now stood and watched her impassively?

Jean saw that the table was set for only one and that he stood—erect, with his hands at his side, his eyes before him, quiet, deferential. The meaning of his attitude suddenly came to her.

"Don't be absurd!" she exclaimed. "Of course you are to eat! Sit down."

"Unwelcome bread," Bradley said in quiet explanation, but he brought another plate and sat opposite her.

He did not volunteer speech. Jean sampled the biscuits, tasted the ham and drank her coffee. Her amazement increased. She could no longer hold back her question.

"Where—how did you learn to cook like this?"

Bradley answered quietly. "When I first went—down there, I was put in the kitchen. I—you learned what they told you or you suffered. I—I learned."

Jean asked no further questions and Bradley ate in silence, too. When he had finished, he crossed his knife and fork on his plate, lifted his cup and saucer deftly and placed them in it, and then sat erect, with hands folded before him, as if waiting. The movements were unconscious, automatic, and when he looked up to find her eyes on him, in realization of what he did, he flushed and by a sudden movement pushed the plate from him.

Then he stood erect. "I have eaten. I wish to pay you. I have no money, but I can work. What shall I do?"

It was a stranger speaking. Surely this man had never been her husband even in the casual and detached manner they had played at life! But when she answered she spoke as she would have done—back on Highland Avenue.

"I am sure you do not wish to be insulting."

"Certainly not," he said impassively. "But neither do I wish to be under obligations. I have eaten. I will now work. It is the routine of life."

Jean was puzzled. "There is nothing for you to do."

Bradley corrected her tonelessly. "I heard you speak of loading your coal. I will help."

Jean suddenly resolved to humor him. This strange, passionless being, this wraith-like man, who spoke so simply and unaffectedly of what men usually hid with shame, was interesting.

The Bradley Drew she had known had never done a day of manual labor in his life. She would watch this newcomer to see if she could recognize any trace of the man who had been her husband. Perhaps he would grow tired. Certainly she had made it plain that he was under no necessity of working for the food she had given. When he realized that, he would grow weary. Perhaps he hoped . . .

She led the way to a shed in the rear, which she unlocked with a key at her belt. Inside were mining supplies—long coils of fuse, picks, shovels and, in one corner in a rack, a pile of long yellow cylinders in waxed paper. Bradley glanced at them.

"Dynamite," he said. "Very dangerous. You should use permissible explosive."

Without further comment, he shouldered the shovel she indicated and followed her out. As she locked the door, a huge truck came clattering down the highway from Attapulgas and stopped beside the coal across from the cottage.

Jean hurried over and spoke to the driver.

"My men haven't come yet. They'll be here right away."

Behind her, Bradley said quietly, "I will start in now."

He discarded his coat and rolled up his sleeves while Jean stared. Another difference from the man she had known: Bradley's arms were marked by deep scars with here and there flecks of blue that puzzled her; under the skin the muscles played in long rolls. She saw now why the coat had seemed ill-fitting. Great muscles at the shoulders bulged out the thin denim shirt and knotted and worked as he swung the eighteen-inch shovel tentatively.

BRADLEY did not glance at her as he thrust the huge blade of the shovel into the coal and tossed its load into the truck with an effortless heave. Then he did it again—and again. Jean watched, fascinated.

A miner's shovel is not easy to handle. It is poorly balanced, and the short handle puts the strain on the shoulder muscles. But Bradley did not seem to find it a strain. In smooth rhythm, the shovel swung back and forth and at every upward move spouted a load of coal into the truck.

Presently the other three men came up the path and hurried a little as they saw the waiting truck. Jean introduced her husband briefly as they prepared to work.

"This is a new man who will help with the loading," she said. "The Attapulgas folks are in a hurry."

"What's your name?" asked the youngest and largest of the men.

Bradley glanced at his wife before he answered. "Bradley," he said shortly.

"Mine's Jim Hicks. There's Tom West, an' that's Ed Dunn. Let's go."

The four shovels began to play and the coal pile to diminish. Presently the truck was loaded and drove away, but almost at once another took its place.

Jean watched from the window of the little house where they could not see her. She marked the effortless swing of her husband's body as he handled the shovel and its load. He had not been like that—before. He seemed tireless. Now and then he paused to wipe his face when the others did likewise, but he handled shovel for shovel with them.

Jean expected him to grow tired, but apparently he did not. Her eyes followed his figure. He was not a big man; he seemed almost slight beside the others. She noticed a characteristic common to them all—the huge shoulders with the rolling muscles playing along flat backs. It took strength to handle a shovel like that.

The men made rapid inroads into the coal as the day progressed and truck after truck roared away, each with its full three tons. Presently, as a loaded truck left, she saw the men cease working and stand their shovels against the coal.

The three miners went to their dinner pails and then to the well for a wash, but Bradley sat down under a tree and wiped his face with a sleeve that was dirty now. It left a broad smear in its wake.

The men began eating and she saw them say something to Bradley, who shook his head. She waited for him to come to the house, but he did not move. When her impatience could wait no longer, she went to the door and called him.

He rose obediently and came to the steps, looking up at her much as he had done the day before.

"Your dinner is ready," she said. "Come and eat."

Without replying, he glanced at his hands that were black with coal. He moved toward the well and scrubbed vigorously in the chill water; but he did not sputter as the others had done. All his movements were like that—quiet. He ate silently, and when he had finished rose and went outside. Another truck had come and he began loading. Presently the others joined him, and the afternoon wore on as they loaded truck after truck.

It was late when the last of the coal was loaded. The men laid aside their shovels and straightened with a sigh. They were glad it was done. From the high seat, the truck driver called to Jean.

"Here's your invoice, Mis' Drew," he said. "Mr. Anderson said come in tomorrow and get your money."

Jean took the folded paper he handed to her and glanced at it. "Fifty-one tons. Very well, I'll be in tomorrow." The truck pulled away and Jean turned to the men. "That will be all for today, boys. It's too late to try to do anything inside. Let that go until tomorrow."

They left with alacrity. Bradley watched them go, and when they had disappeared down the path toward the valley, turned without a word and picked up his coat and cap. He went to the well and there scrubbed again until no trace of the coal dust was left on him—only the smears on his shirt. Then he came to Jean, who sat on the porch at the head of the steps, her feet tucked under her and her arms clasping her knees. Her eyes were vacant as she stared into the woods.

Bradley stood for a moment in silence and then spoke. "I—I guess I'll go now."

CURIOUSLY, Jean was reluctant to see him go. She wanted to learn more about him, to get a closer view of what five years in prison had done to him. Because he asked nothing, she was more disposed to offer it. She sparred a moment.

"What are you going to do?"

Bradley looked out into the woods. "Work," he said vaguely, "if I can get it. I guess I can. Good miners are scarce."

"Miners! You?"

"Yes. That's another thing I learned—down there." He straightened a little as if a memory stirred him. "I was in the mines four years. First-class man for two years."

Faint horror showed in her eyes. "You don't mean you were—were leased?"

Bradley's tone was very matter-of-fact. "Of course. The state sold my body for ninety dollars a month. It was cheap for what I did."

"Oh!"

It was almost a gasp. A leased convict! She shuddered at the thought. She had condemned him to that! She knew the horrors of the convict lease system, the terrible mines where men were forced to work on a seam so narrow that they could not stand upright. Safety measures neglected! Poorly fed! Cheated by the company that leased them from the state. Flogged when they did not get their tasks. It was inconceivable.

"I—I did not know that!" Her words were almost pleading.

"Of course not. How could you?"

Fascinated, she reviewed in her mind the stories she had heard, the facts brought out in the periodic investigations by the legislature, the brutalities.

"Was it—was it bad?"

Still there was no hint of feeling in Bradley's voice. "It was hell!"

Her voice sank to a whisper. "Were you—were you ever whipped?"

She saw one hand clench until the knuckles showed white. But his voice was passionless. "Once."

"For—for what?"

"I did not get my task. I was a first-class man, and ten tons were required of me each day. I had mashed my hand and couldn't do it. But the doctor wouldn't believe it. So—they whipped me."

He glanced at her and she saw his eyes—lambent now with the long lines along his cheeks deeper. His voice was controlled. "It's—it's over now. I don't like to think of it. I told you that one learned or suffered." He turned and looked at her directly. His eyes were softer, but still he spoke in that queer controlled voice. "Your interest is a little late. Why all this?"

"How you must have suffered!"

"Of course. But I had done wrong and it was right that I should suffer."

They were silent, she staring out on the valley at her feet. Horror was still in her eyes. Surely his punishment had been out of all proportion to his offense! And she had done it! She was not satisfied to let him go. She wanted to hear more, to learn in detail of the years that he had spent. He was so different, so contained, so quiet! Before, he had been buoyant, careless, irresponsible, light-hearted. And he was only thirty-four now. She looked at him. One would have thought him fifty.

SHE spoke slowly, her words hesitant. "You—you have no plans?"

He shook his head. "None. I'm starting over, I don't know where or how." He turned to her, but looked down at his feet. One toe absently kicked the gravel. "You—you never—got a divorce?"

"No."

"Might I ask why?"

"When the trial was over and the crash came Brother took charge of everything. When all your—our debts came, it took everything. We still owed a lot, but we kept the Chinquapin. So Brother and I came out here and he started operating it again. It had been idle a long time, bu he got it in shape. I—I guess I didn't get a divorce because there was no reason. I didn't want it. It would have meant publicity—more talk. I just let it go."

"And your brother?"

She swallowed painfully. "Archie has been dead three years. When he died, I stayed on out here. He taught me what there was to know about the mine. There wasn't much else to do, so I stayed. I have been here since."

"And you are still my wife?"

"Yes, legally."

"Thank you for the word. I've been forgotten by now. You could have a divorce. You've grounds."

"Grounds?"

"Yes, conviction of an offense involving moral turpitude is ground for a divorce in this state." His voice was cool. "That was one of the things I wondered about—down there."

Again they were silent. Jean found these spaces of silence oppressive. They gave her time for unwelcome thoughts. Bradley asked no further questions. At last he stirred and put on his cap.

"I've started to leave three times. This time, I guess I'll go." He hesitated a moment, started to extend his hand and then thought better of it. "Good-by," he said.

Jean looked up at him. "Good miners are scarce," she observed.

If Bradley was surprised at her words, he did not show it. "That is true."

"I operate a mine."

"Yes." There was no suggestion of a question in his voice. He waited to see if there was anything further. Then he spoke again. "Good-by."

As before, she spoke irrelevantly. "You plan to work in the mines?"

He gestured. "I prefer that to cooking. Those are the two things I learned—down there."

Jean did not look at him. "I need another man."

"Are you offering me the place?"

Jean waited before she answered. The situation held possibilities. She had stagnated of late. At least this would furnish an interest outside of the deadly monotony of the mine. And she could study him and see what had brought the changes. She was roused from her reverie by his voice. "Are you offering me the place?" he repeated.

She drew a long breath. "Yes. Will you take it?"

"Yes," he said. And that was all.

JEAN planned to be up before Bradley the next morning, but again she was mistaken. As before, when she stepped into the living-room the fire burned in the grate, the appetizing aroma of coffee came from the dining-room, and Bradley's pallet had been neatly rolled up and placed in a corner.

She went hurriedly into the kitchen, but breakfast was already prepared and Bradley stood by the stove. She noted with a little surprise that the soiled shirt of yesterday, this morning was spotless—but wrinkled. It came to her that he had washed it during the night; a little lump was in her throat as she sat down at the table.

"I must go to town this morning," she told him as they rose. "I'll give you a pick from the storehouse and Jimmy Hicks will show you what to do. This is really a very simple little operation; the drift hasn't been cut back far enough to make ventilation a problem, so they just cut the coal and load it. That's all. I'll leave your dinner on a shelf in the kitchen. You come out at noon and eat it."

Bradley nodded. When she left that morning on the Warrior bus for Attapulgas he had been an hour in the mine. Silently he had followed Hicks and the others, and she turned away with a little ache in her heart. Once he had walked jauntily; now he strode heavily, with each foot planted firmly, and with no swing to the shoulders that had grown amazingly.

In spite of her perplexities, Jean was not unhappy as she sat in one corner of the Warrior bus and gazed out on the flitting green landscape. For the first time since the crash that had cost her husband, fortune and brother in less than two years, she was interested in something besides the economic urge for food. She had been bitter, but now she found that she had been bitter against a person who did not exist. She had pictured her husband as still jaunty, still careless, shedding the shame of his punishment as he had shed other unpleasant things. She had believed his self-sufficiency would keep his spirit from

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hurt, and she did not believe that the body could be greatly injured when the mind was whole.

But she had been wrong. This man who spoke slowly, whose movements were so cautious, so wraithlike, whose monotony of tone told of years of rigid repression—this man was a stranger to her. Her husband had gone out of her life, and the man who came back had nothing in common with him. This new man was interesting. Jean was no longer afraid of him. Strangely enough she believed, when he said that he had no purpose in coming back, that sinister motives had not sent him to the clearing. She started a little as she caught herself already trusting this new man more than she had ever trusted her husband.

The marks of the prison were strong upon him; they showed in every movement, in every carefully restrained gesture, in the sadness that shone out of his gray eyes. A man like that, whipped! She shuddered.

She was thinking that she had had a part in sending him to the mines, a slave of cruel taskmasters whose one interest was to get out of his body double the toil justified by the ninety dollars they paid the state. If she had known that, perhaps she might have hesitated longer that day on the witness stand in the courthouse at Attapulgas. The lawyer's question had been simple.

"Did you sign this check?" he had asked, holding up a pink slip.

"I did not," she replied.

"Do you recognize the writing, and if so, whose is it?"

She hesitated. Her brother was sitting beside the counsel for the state. His blue eyes were hard, implacable. That check represented a fortune to him. Bradley had taken it—"stolen" was the word Archie used—to provide security for a purchase of speculative coal lands. He had been stripped and when Archie McCameron discovered that Bradley Drew had used Jean's money as well as Archie's own, he was adamant.

It was he that brought her to the witness stand, testifying against her husband. Her husband's lawyer had pleaded with her, pointing out that no wife need testify against her husband; but her brother had been unyielding.

"He has robbed you—and me," young Archie said fiercely. "Let him go to his punishment."

STILL she hesitated. If only her own money had been involved, she would not have been so bitter; but she felt that her husband had robbed her brother. How to hold the scales between them. With whom should she stand? Was it right to shield one at the expense of the other? Was it just to Archie, who had taken the blow so hard, to claim the signature as her own and free her husband? If she failed Archie now . . . Her brother and her husband had been partners—and she, too. Now they were bankrupt, from her husband's doing. She spoke almost without volition.

"The check was signed by my husband."

"The defendant in this case?"

"Yes."

"Without your knowledge or consent?"

"Yes."

That had been all. It had been enough and her husband went to the penitentiary for five years. "Forgery," the law said, but over her brother's body a year later she had termed it "murder."

Archie McCameron had wilted under the loss of his money, but worse than that had been grief at his betrayal. The winter had been hard; he had not been overly careful; pneumonia had come; now he slept on a bank of shale just above the Chinquapin, under a huge pine where Jean could visit him frequently.

Those had been bitter days. As Jean gazed out of the bus, her mouth contracted at the memory of the awful loneliness of those first few weeks after her brother's death. Alone! But she had found her salvation and peace in work and had been fairly content until this new invasion of her life.

Her husband asked nothing. Not since he had been at the tiny little house had he even by his actions asked sympathy. She was curious about his attitude toward his prison years. He never evaded them, and yet only when he had spoken of the lash had there been bitterness. Five years! A long time when counted by days and hours!

The bus reached Attapulgas almost before she knew it. Jean rose with curiously mixed feelings. Her thoughts had not been pleasant, but they had been interesting. She was reluctant to forgo them.

Once off the bus, however, she had scant time for reflection. First came the business of her trip. At the yard office of the Attapulgas Coal Company she collected a little over two hundred and fifty dollars for her coal hauled the previous day. There also she received a blow.

"When will you want more?" she asked Anderson, a small man with a froglike body all stomach and head.

Anderson shook his head regretfully. "Guess I can't use no more for quite a spell," he said. "Gittin' so you can't buy no coal at all 'thout havin' questions asked, an' I can't afford to git in bad with my mines."

"Have they been complaining?"

"Yessum. They sent me word they wasn't feedin' no yard to help keep up a wagon mine and I'd better buy all my coal from you if I'd ruther. You know you can't supply me with nothin' like the coal I need. I was just usin' yours as the gravy."

Confronted by this new problem, Jean visited other yards to meet the same story.

"Mine managers say we ain't to help feed no wagon mines at all," was the unvarying response. Thornton, away over on the north side, ventured a kindly word.

"Why don't you peddle it, Mrs. Drew?" he suggested. "That's one thing they can't stop."

"It begins to look as if that is what I'll have to do," she said. "And yet I didn't want to do that. It takes so much more time, and it cuts into profits."

UNTIL nearly one o'clock, Jean sought in vain to place an order for more coal; but the retail yards were firm. The word had gone out and, one and all, they were afraid of offending the all-powerful Mine Managers' Association.

At last, in desperation, she decided to abandon her attempt until her next trip to town and busied herself with shopping. She barely caught the Warrior bus as it left the city at five o'clock.

Going back, her thoughts were not so pleasant as they had been. She stared straight before her, and a faint crease came between her eyes. She spoke briefly to people she knew and was deaf to the general conversation.

When the bus panted to a stop before the house at the Chinquapin, she saw her husband standing in the door, looking down. Behind him, the leaping flames cast up his figure and he seemed unbelievably tall as his shadow danced back and forth across the road. The house looked inviting and her heart warmed a little in her weary body.

This was not the first time she had come home from Attapulgas exhausted after a day of hurrying from one coal yard to another. Before, the house had been dark and cheerless. She had been forced to go into the chill interior, kindle a fire and cook her meal; more often she had tumbled into bed, too tired to care for food. Perhaps she could have had a companion, but it had seemed a sacrilege to bring another into the house that had been so dear to her brother and herself. The isolation of the house made it difficult to get any one but a negro woman. So after Archie's death she had lived on alone.

This passed through her mind as she climbed stiffly down from the bus and the driver began handing out her multitude of packages. The heavier things she had bought would come out tomorrow.

Her husband still stood in the door and watched. He made no move to come to her until she called as the bus drove away with thundering exhaust, as if gathering strength for the long climb up Sand Mountain to Warrior.

"Bradley, come and help me with my packages!" she called when she saw that he would not come.

He walked deliberately down to her and began gathering the bundles in long arms. He did not speak, nor did she, until they came into the cozy room, glowing redly in the light of the fire and seeming a very haven of refuge from the outside world. She sank into a chair with a sigh.

"My, but I'm tired!" she said.

"I thought you would be. Come into the dining-room. Coffee is ready and biscuits will be in a moment. I put them in the oven when I saw you coming."

The meal was appetizing. Jean drank thirstily of the coffee. Bradley had heated the milk so that it would temper the drink and not cool it. There was a chicken, broiled. She had a flock which ran wild in the mountains and came home only to roost. She seldom ate them because they were so difficult to catch.

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Bradley stood silent and waited on her deftly. She began to relax, but did not talk until they were once more in the living-room and she began opening her packages.

"I bought you some things," she said, rummaging through the bundles to find what she wished. "You—you had nothing and if you stay here you will need them."

She opened one bundle and drew out overalls; another disclosed shirts; a third underclothes; still another socks and handkerchiefs. "I hope you like the things," she ventured. "I had to guess at your sizes, but I think they will fit."

Bradley looked down at the confusion on the floor and she saw there was a little flush in his face. He touched the shirts lightly. She read his thought. They were the first things not prison garb he had had in five years.

"Thank you," he said. "I will pay you out of what I earn."

She put the thought away with uplifted hand. "We need not speak of that. You needed them and I got them."

SHE continued to open bundles and display things to him; a miner's cap with a slot for the lamp; heavy hob-nailed shoes; shaving things; even collar buttons. She had forgotten nothing. At last she opened a bundle from which an object fell out. Bradley picked it up curiously.

"What is this?" he asked.

Jean looked at him. "Why, gloves, of course! For your hands."

Bradley laughed faintly. "You were dreaming. For my hands! Look at them!"

He spread them under the light as he spoke. They were calloused and roughened, with a jagged tear that had just begun to heal across the back of one. Coal dust that no soap or water could reach had worked into them and the nails were reddened and broken.

Again Bradley smiled. "Gloves! For them! You were thinking too far back. I'll never need gloves again. You don't use them—down there. I guess I've forgotten how."

A lump rose in Jean's throat at his words. He was so matter-of-fact about it and his hands gave mute evidence of the work he had done. But they were still deft as he returned the gloves to their package and knotted the cord neatly.

"You may save those for some one else," Bradley said. "It was kind of you to do this. I did not expect it."

"But this isn't all," Jean answered. "Other things will be out in the morning. A cot for this room—and blankets. You—you see, you were so absolutely without everything that I couldn't carry them all."

Bradley asked a question—his first. "You think this arrangement will be permanent?"

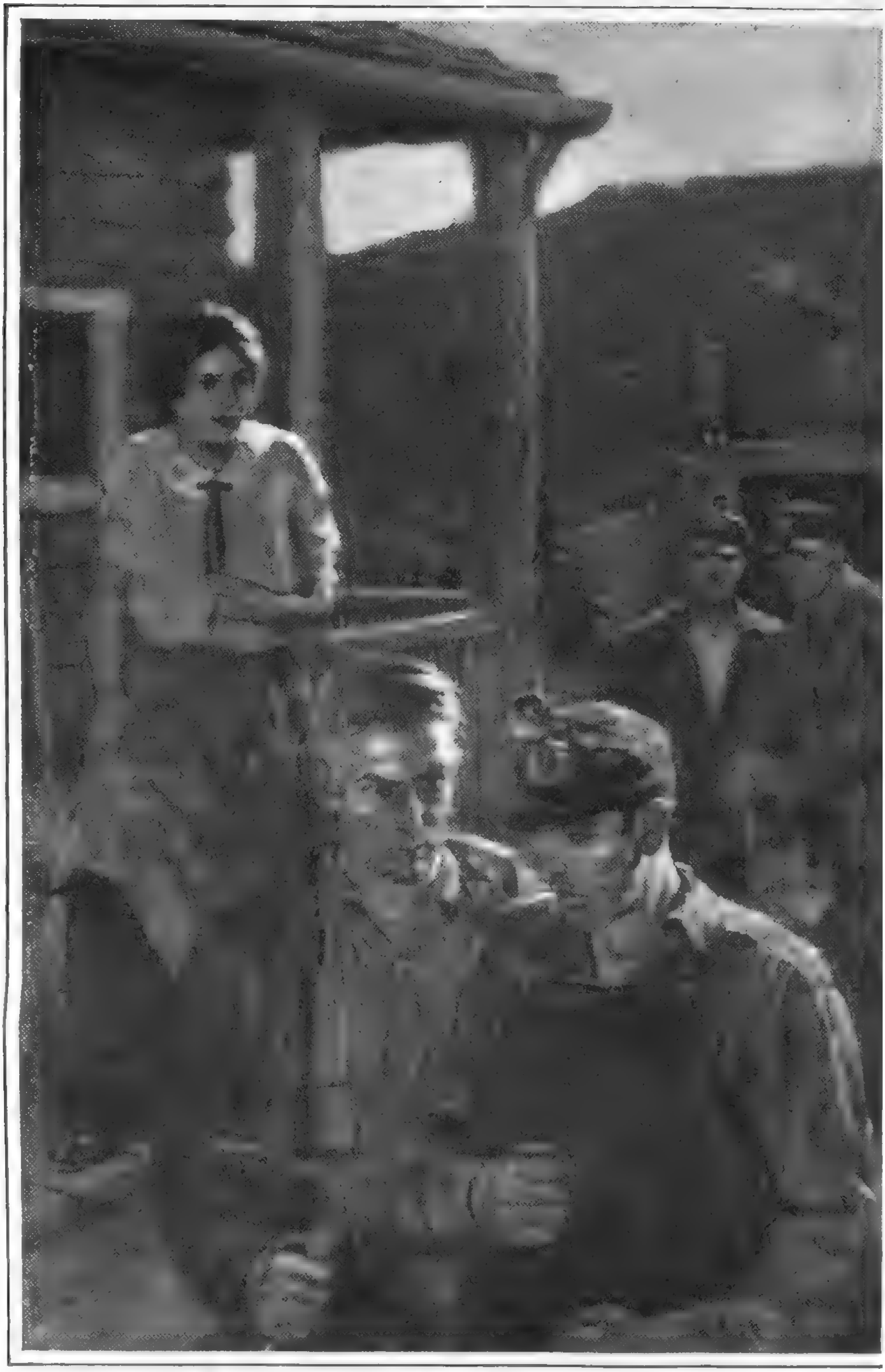
"I don't know; but I didn't think from what you said the other day that you would like going into Attapulgas. You—seemed to be sensitive about meeting people, and I thought I would save you the need of it."

Jean went to bed early that night. She was weary and Bradley made no effort to keep her. She left him sitting by the fire, staring into the glowing embers. She wondered of what he thought; probably of some bitter experience of the five years—down there. There was a little ache in her heart as she crept into bed. Her bitterness was all gone. What he had done suddenly appeared trivial in the face of what he had suffered. She was glad she had bought the things for him. He had not said much, but that first light touch on the shirts and the little flush in his cheeks had thanked her more than words.

THEY fitted into their routine of living with surprising ease. Jean had thought there might be difficult moments, but there never were. Nor did Bradley change as the days passed. He labored in the mine from daylight until dark and the pile of coal at its mouth grew with amazing speed. But he never stepped out of his attitude; he never spoke personally to her; there was no hint of intimacy between them.

The cot and the blankets had been placed in the living-room and he lived there unobtrusively, quietly, neatly. He cooked as often as she—and always better. But mostly he toiled in the mine.

Jean marveled at his tireless strength. He would come out of the blackness in the evening after hours of swinging the sharp cutting-pick, apparently as fresh as when he entered in the morning. He was unbelievably silent. Jean could not reconcile this with the man she had known. He had been full of talk, witty—with a bit of



Bradley spoke at his elbow. "I wouldn't finish that, if I were you." Hicks saw that he still grasped the pointed pick lightly in his right hand.

drollness. But this man, moving firmly, quietly, with a light tread that somehow seemed heavy, purposeful, had no kinship with the other.

In spite of her troubles, Jean watched him constantly. Sometimes he saw her bewilderment and shrugged his shoulders with a wry smile.

"Wondering, aren't you? Habit, that's all. That's what—down there did to me. I don't think the change was so bad."

Gradually he lost the prison mannerisms. The hardest to shake off was that trick of crossing his knife and fork on his plate, placing the cup and saucer on them and sitting erect at the end of every meal. Punishment for violation of that rule had been the hardest for him to bear—down there, and it was the last to leave him. He lost his prison mannerisms, but his silence stayed with him. It was not a dour stillness, not sulky, not reproachful. It just seemed that he had nothing to say.

Sundays were the most difficult for Jean. She did not see much of Bradley then. He always cooked breakfast. She protested at first, but he explained.

"It's the only morning you can sleep late," he said. "Why not do it?"

"But you?"

"I?" He shook his head. "One doesn't get up at dawn for five years and remain able to sleep late. I'm used to it. I don't mind."

So on Sundays Bradley cooked breakfast and frequently during the week—but on Sunday always. That eaten, he disappeared. He wandered over the mountain; she wondered where, but she did not ask. He disappeared into the woods and was gone, coming back late in the day, when the shadows began to fall and the mellow cow-bells began their daily tonk-tonk as their owners took leisurely steps homeward toward the valley. His face was always a little clearer after these absences and gradually understanding came to Jean. He had been shut away so long from the outside that he thirsted for it and Sunday was the only opportunity for companionship with the trees.

Now and then she caught a touch of softness in him. One afternoon he came in with a huge bunch of violets. These he arranged in a bowl on the table in the living-room. She had been reading at a window and watched without comment. When he had done, he glanced at her.

"Color," he observed. "They lack one thing, though. They're wild and have no fragrance. A flower without fragrance is like a woman without children."

He bit his lip at the speech and turned away without giving her opportunity to answer.

Then one Sunday he had brought in a great bush of sweet shrub and the haunting perfume filled the room. She loved sweet shrub. He did not know it, but she pulled four of the buds and tied them in a corner of her handkerchief, putting it away far down in her trunk. It was a trick of her girlhood. Sometimes she got them out and their fragrance brought vague dreams.

JEAN was too busy for overmuch dreaming. Business harassed her. Markets became increasingly difficult to find and she resolutely refused to accept Thornton's suggestion to peddle her coal. That was beyond her resources and would require too much of her time.

Everywhere she turned in Attapulgas she met the opposition of the Mine Managers' Association to wagon mines. Apparently they were determined to choke them off. She had no contracts for her coal as had the other owners of wagon mines that dotted the highways leading into Attapulgas. She had refused the lower price offered on contracts, confidently accepting the hazard of the spot coal market.

When she had done that she had not known of the hostility of the Mine Managers' Association. She felt rather helpless. This was one of the things her brother had not taught her. How to watch the expense of production, to operate the mine at the lowest possible cost, yes; but he—and she—had assumed that there would always be a market for coal. Now she was finding her mistake and she grew distrait under the strain of the constant search for buyers. Orders for ten tons here, twenty there, even as low as five, she accepted gratefully.

She spent more time than she liked in Attapulgas, but she found that with her husband underground she need not watch the mine closely. With the three men doing the cutting, shooting and loading she had averaged nearly seventy-five tons a week. Bradley's coming increased this. Now she was getting more than a hundred. The gain was out of all proportion to the amount he should have dug.

Tacitly Jean began to look on him as her representative with the men. More and more she dealt with them through him, contenting herself with indicating what she wished and leaving the details to him.

Bradley accepted it and if he realized what was being done he did not comment. But the men recognized and resented it. They regarded Bradley as an interloper and Hicks in particular was resentful. Bradley did not tell Jean, and so the issue came to her without warning.

She had not gone to Attapulgas the morning it happened. At a stroke, she had disposed of her week's output, and she was luxuriating in the unaccustomed freedom from anxiety that overhung her virtually all the time.

She was roused by a hail from outside.

"Mis' Drew! Come out here, please, ma'am!"

She walked to the door to find Jim Hicks standing at the steps. Behind him were the other two, and at one side her husband stood leaning on the handle of a pick and regarding the scene quietly. Hicks's eyes were snapping and his voice was raised.

"We wants to find out something, and find out right now!"

Jean was the business executive when she spoke. "Very well, Hicks, what is it?"

"This here man"—Hicks gestured toward Bradley, who still leaned coolly on the pick handle—"this here man's been bossin' us till we're tired of it. If he's gonna run things we wanta know it. He come in here from nowheres and you'd think he owned the place the way he drives us. How 'bout him?"

Hicks and the others had been at the mine for months. They were good men and Jean was reluctant to lose them; hence she spoke placatingly.

"I'm sorry if you haven't gotten along, Hicks. He is working in the mine for me just as you all are."

"Well, he ain't goin' to work no longer," Hicks declared. "That is, he ain't if I stay in there. Me an' him's goin' to have trouble right smart. I ain't goin' to have no man like him bossin' me around."

Jean's voice chilled. "I'm sorry you feel like that, Hicks. I believe I'll make him foreman of the mine. Suppose you talk to him about that."

At Hicks's tone, Bradley's nose began to pinch in. The smear of coal dust on his face hid the white line around his mouth, but he held himself sternly in check. He was content to allow Jean to manage it in her own way. If she preferred him to go— His shoulders moved under his shirt in a tiny shrug.

HICKS looked at Jean and she looked directly back. "I mean it," she said.

Hicks spat scornfully. "Oh, I see," he sneered. "Foreman in the house as well as the mine. Well, I—"

He had not seen Bradley move, but suddenly he was beside him. Bradley did not raise his voice, but Hicks ceased abruptly when he spoke at his elbow. "I wouldn't finish that, if I were you."

Hicks wheeled on him. "What in hell have you—" he began, and stopped. Bradley's gray eyes were very steady; he was even smiling a little, but Hicks saw that he still grasped the pointed pick lightly in his right hand.

"I've been in the mines. I can go back," Bradley said conversationally.

Hicks's voice died away in a mumble. Bradley did not move and Jean watched them unstirring. She felt the tension, but she seemed paralyzed. Bradley's voice was still easy.

"Well?" he demanded.

But Hicks found that he had little to say. "Well, I ain't goin' to work for no foreman like you."

"That's all right; you can go."

Bradley watched as Hicks went to the mine car, gathered up his coat and dinner pail and departed silently down the path. Bradley turned to the others. "Do you feel like that, too?" he asked.

Dunn laughed uneasily. He was the oldest of the three. "I ain't got no objections to you," he observed. "My job suits me right well."

"That's good," said Bradley, and looked at West. "And you?"

"Guess I'll stick with Ed," the miner said. "Never did see no use in gittin' all het up 'bout nothin'."

"That's all for today, then. I'll see about getting a man in Hicks's place. We'll need more anyhow."

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The men left and Bradley went for his customary bath at the well. Long and carefully he scrubbed before he came into the house. He was more than usually silent at supper. He rose when the meal was over and gathered up the dishes to wash them at the crude sink he had rigged for Jean; but she would not have it.

"Not tonight: I want to talk," she said, and he went obediently into the living-room.

They were silent until Bradley asked a question. "Did you mean that I was to be foreman?"

"Of course. I'll turn over the whole business inside to you. I've enough to do outside." She sighed and he looked at her quickly.

"If I'm to be foreman, I'd like to ask a few questions. May I?"

"Certainly, anything you want to know."

"What is it costing you to mine your coal?" It was the first mention of money between them. He had never asked what she would pay him for his work, nor had she referred to it. But she answered readily enough.

"I pay the men a dollar and ten cents a ton for the mining."

"That is twenty cents a ton above the scale."

"Yes, but you see they load it and bring it out and dump it. I figure that in, too."

"And when they are loading the trucks, what then?"

"They get straight pay then. Six dollars a day."

"What does your hauling cost?"

"From the Chinquapin to Attapulgas? I get a trucking concern to handle it for two dollars a ton."

"So your coal costs you three dollars and ten cents a ton delivered in Attapulgas."

"Yes. You see the hauling isn't so expensive because it is only fifteen miles. I use a trucking firm that serves all the other wagon mines around Attapulgas."

"There are a number of them?"

"Yes, four on this road; and nearly every main pike out of Attapulgas has one or more on it. The coal is close to the surface. Brother explained it to me. This coal used to be as deep underground as the big mines, but the earth changed and left it close to the top. They call them wagon mines because they used to haul their coal in wagons instead of shipping it by railroad. Sometimes I think there are too many. It makes sales competition so keen."

"Do you have difficulty in selling?"

Her answer was reluctant; though he was foreman, she did not relish telling all the details of the business. But she answered at last, "Yes, lately."

"What do you get for your coal?"

"If I'm lucky, I get five dollars a ton delivered. That leaves me a profit of two dollars a ton. If I have to shave the price to sell, then the margin is not so wide."

HE WAS silent, considering. "You are getting around a hundred tons a week here. That's a profit of two hundred dollars a week. Not bad for a woman by herself."

"No. When Archie died, I thought I was lucky to be able to do so well. I've paid nearly all the debts now."

Bradley stirred in his chair. "There wasn't enough to pay them from what I—I left when I went—down there?"

"No, not nearly. Not as Archie wanted them paid. I promised him I would before he died and every one has been patient. They're almost paid now."

Bradley's voice was low when he answered. "So you have been slaving out here all this time for—for an idea. You didn't have to do it."

"Yes, I did—for Archie. It made him happy and he knew I could do it. Perhaps that is why I have never given it up and sold the mine. I had one or two good offers from the Mine Managers' Association. They don't care for independent mines."

"Why not?"

"Well, it disturbs prices. The Mine Managers control all the retail yards in Attapulgas and they don't like to be undersold. I've kept out of trouble with them so far, but now they've even shut down on me. I've sold to some yards. They pay five dollars for my coal and mix it in with their mine coal and sell it for ten dollars a ton. That's the price the Mine Managers fix for Attapulgas. But the Mine Managers heard it was being done and I've had difficulty."

"But how do the Managers control the yards? Do they own them?"

"Oh, no! They don't have to do that. Take Mr. Anderson, for instance. He has a contract with the Marble Mine to supply him with all the domestic coal he needs.

In the contract is a clause that he must sell that coal at the price fixed by the mine. I've seen the contract. Suppose they were displeased with what he did. They simply wouldn't have the coal for him and he couldn't buy from another mine because they'd blacklist him. He'd go bankrupt before he could get any coal. It's possible because the Mine Managers control all the big mines and—"

"But that isn't legal!"

She smiled wearily. "Legal or not, it's done." Discussion of her difficulties did not lessen them. The Mine Managers had Attapulgas in an iron grip although the city was in the heart of the coal fields. They supplied fuel at the price they chose.

Bradley's tone was speculative as he asked one more question: "How do the other wagon mines manage?"

"I don't know. I guess they have regular customers that take all their output. You see, the Chinquapin isn't big enough to supply all one market would need. Besides, Brother never did that and I never tried. I just continued on as he did."

The conversation stopped. Bradley asked no more questions and she was too tired to volunteer anything. She went early to bed, leaving him still staring into the fire. The posture was becoming familiar to her now.

Bradley was a good foreman. She judged of that by the amount of coal he and the men brought out. From somewhere, she did not ask, Bradley obtained a man to fill Hicks's place and the four kept the pile steadily growing.

JEAN'S difficulties at Attapulgas were becoming more and more acute. There seemed to be some active hostility in the Mine Managers' Association directed at her. Slowly her markets were shut off. She had forty tons before the mine now and she did not know where to sell it.

Bradley gradually slipped out of her mind in the economic difficulties in which she was enmeshed. She foresaw that she would be forced to close the mine if she could not sell her coal quickly, and that was daily becoming more difficult. The men must be paid. Her resources did not permit long delay of sales.

She was inattentive one afternoon when Bradley approached her. It was Saturday and the men had quit work early. They liked their Saturday afternoons off and when there was no great pressure of work Bradley indulged them.

Jean was sitting on the steps in a rocker. She had been in Attapulgas the day before and had failed to sell her coal. The dealers were polite but firm. They were not using wagon-mine coal. It was not satisfactory to their customers. Nor would they listen to her arguments.

Bradley was on the steps, washed and brushed and carefully dressed in a suit she had bought him. He had never gone to Attapulgas since the day he had come to the mine, and that was weeks ago now. Without asking, Jean bought his clothes for him, even his toothbrushes. It was the sole link with the man she had known—this careful attention to his person.

Jean was tired and she looked at her husband enviously; he never seemed to tire. As he sat hunched up, with his arms on his knees, the huge muscles stood out on his back. From where she sat, she could see his hands. They were reddened and roughened, with black smears that water would not bring out. They would require bleaching.

From time to time Bradley glanced at her and then returned to his contemplation of the valley. At last he rose and spoke without preliminary.

"I—I want— Could you let me have a hundred dollars?"

Jean looked at him in surprise. Strangely enough, he had never mentioned money to her. On the time book, she had entered his name and credited him with the regular pay of the miners; afterward there had been ten per cent additional as foreman. He had never asked for it and she had not offered it, merely carrying the amount as a balance to his credit. Nor did she charge against it money spent for his clothes.

She spoke promptly. "Of course; I owe you much more than that. What—" She checked herself. She had no right to question him about what he wished to do with so large a sum. She wondered if he were going to Attapulgas and if he would return. She did not like the idea of his not coming back. Insensibly he had come to have a part in her life. Unassuming, keeping to the background and not at all as in the old days in Attapulgas, yet he was always in her thoughts. Sudden loneliness assailed her at the thought of his going. But if he wished— He was speaking.

"Might I have it now?"

She rose. "Certainly, if I have that much in the house."

She had just that amount and counted it out to him in bills of small denominations. She wondered what he planned to do with it, but he thrust the roll into his pocket without explanation.

"Thank you," was all he said.

He was through early the next morning. He cooked breakfast and Jean lay late in bed. After the dishes were cleared and the kitchen swept, he took down his coat, got his hat and looked in at her.

"I'm going now," he said, and did not wait for a reply.

Jean looked after him, a little hurt. Did he intend to come back? On his solitary rambles through the hills, ordinarily he did not tell her he was gone; he simply disappeared. It was only by watching that she had found where he spent his Sundays.

ALL day she went about the house with a curiously depressed feeling, as if something were missing. Before, she had never been lonely. Now she missed his figure on the steps or in the yard, contemplative, always thinking, yet of late somehow companionable even in his silence. Her thoughts of him were much kinder than she would have believed possible. There was no sentiment in it; vaguely she felt the lack of something and, when she thought of his not returning, she knew it was that.

The day dragged, although the sun shone brightly outside, while a breeze off Sand Mountain tempered the heat of the June sun. On the porch, Jean drowsed and thought of her husband and herself. His going was a mistake for him. Perhaps if he had stayed she would have forgotten, or at least have forgiven him.

But it suddenly occurred to her that he had never asked forgiveness. Perhaps he thought that his suffering had made that unnecessary. Well, perhaps he was right.

She would miss his quiet deftness around the house, and she would not soon find another foreman as good as he. She recognized the feeling that dictated that he leave as empty-handed as he had come. She wondered, if he left thus, why he had come. Had he meant it when he said he came only to ask a question?

Her thoughts turned to the barren years behind her. She would wonder about him, where he was, what he was doing; if he could put behind him the routine of the prison and forget the days in stripes. She had been cruel in not writing to him. He was right. Even an unfriendly and reproachful message would have been something. He could not pierce the veil of silence and she would not. Would he remember that when he was gone and disappear again from her life as when he had gone behind those gray walls—down there?

In the midst of her thoughts, Bradley walked around the corner of the house and seated himself on the steps. He took off his hat to fan and Jean saw that the damp hair clung close to his forehead. She studied the face that was half turned from her so that she could see only one cheek, with its deep line and the long chin. What would he do if she suddenly asked him to stay on —on new terms? She dallied with the thought, knowing it to be impossible; she did not know that he wished it; in her heart neither did she, but his nearness intrigued her. Since he had been there, he had never so much as touched her. Always there was some excuse. It was not pointed, it was unobtrusively done, but she had watched and known that it was being done. She remembered the grip of the lean brown hands on the handle of a pick. They could crush. Had they forgotten how to caress?

Suddenly Bradley turned and looked at her, and abruptly he fell into perspective. Unemotional, reserved, silent, moving quickly, deftly, with gray eyes that were not melancholy, but that held no hint of laughter in their depths, he was the same man who had walked out of the woods to stand at her step. Somehow, she had never forgotten the way he had stood and looked up at her. He was looking at her now.

BRADLEY'S hand moved and he tossed a paper into her lap. "There's something that might interest you," he said.

Wonderingly she opened it and read:

> I agree to sell to Mrs. Jean Drew the output of the Mary Ann mine at $2 a ton, f. o. b. the mine and acknowledge receipt of $100 as earnest money to apply on the contract when it is signed.
>
> HENRY WEATHERS.

Jean was dismayed. "But—but what am I to do with it? I can't sell my own coal. I haven't told you before, but I can't even sell the coal out there." And she gestured toward the huge mound across from the little house.

"You sold it before, didn't you? You can sell it again."

Jean's dismay increased. "But all the markets are closed to me! I've been all over Attapulgas and not a yard will handle my coal at any price!"

Bradley's voice was quiet. "I'm sorry I presumed. Well, let the hundred dollars go and don't sign the contract."

"I didn't mean that! I'd sell it if I could, but I can't. And I don't know what I'm to do about the Chinquapin."

Bradley was silent a long time before he answered. "Will you accept advice from me?"

She nodded, wordless. The implication of his words did not strike her.

Bradley stretched down a long leg and began to draw figures in the sand with a toe. It was a trick of his. "Well, if you don't think I'm presuming, I think I can show you how to handle it. I've thought it all out. You are working on too small a scale."

She looked the question she did not ask.

"You've tried only the yards, haven't you?" he asked. She nodded. "They aren't the only people who buy coal. Ever try anywhere else?"

She shook her head. "Archie didn't and I never thought of it."

"Well, suppose you try. This is the season for buying coal—in the summer when it's cheap. I'll bet the Twickenham Hotel will take your coal. Try them. Try the Associated Laundries. Scale your prices if you have to. Quit trying to sell to the yards. Try other places where the Mine Managers' Association can't get you. Are you interested?"

"Yes. Very much."

"There's money in it if you work it right. You haven't been trying to make money. You pay two dollars for the Mary Ann coal. It will cost you two dollars to haul it, but when you can keep trucks busy all the time, you can get it done cheaper than that. You can even buy your own trucks and make your own deliveries. Suppose you sell the Mary Ann coal at four dollars and a half. That's fifty cents a ton profit. On the two hundred tons of Mary Ann coal, you would make a hundred dollars every week. If you can sell your own coal, that'll give you another hundred or maybe two. Take small profits and count on a quick turnover. It mounts into money."

He was speaking very quietly, but Jean found courage in his words. He was not enthusiastic; he did not show so much feeling, but his voice was filled with a quiet confidence that inspired her.

"I'll go in tomorrow and do it," she promised. "You will come with me?"

He smiled wryly. "Hardly. I might be recognized. No, I guess I'll stay here; but maybe I can help you with those debts you've managed for so long."

Jean looked down at him. "It's—it's rather queer to be partners again—after all that has passed."

Bradley's face darkened. "I'm not a partner," he said. "I'm merely trying to help."

JEAN dreaded her trip into Attapulgas that morning, but when she reached the city she found that her fears had been needless. She did not realize until long afterward that Bradley had anticipated her doubts and had fortified her against them and armed her with the certainty of his own confidence.

He walked to the road with her and they stood waiting for the Warrior bus to appear over the crest of the ridge on its morning trip into town. Jean was surprised; he had never done such a thing before.

"Don't be frightened," Bradley said quietly. "It will be no different from dealing with the yard owners. You'll just be meeting new men. Remember that you have something it is to their advantage to buy—something they must have—and sell them that idea. I'd try the Twickenham first. They ought to use considerable coal in a ten-story hotel. Ask for the steward and offer him whatever coal he needs at a dollar under the market. It doesn't matter if your profits are small at first. You are trying to get a foothold, not to make money now. That will come later. It will not be hard."

Nor was it. Jean was nervous when she was shown into the steward's office at the Twickenham, the city's biggest and most imposing hotel. The steward was a hard-faced, old-young man, who walked with a limp.

Jean was very businesslike. "Have you bought your winter coal yet?"

The steward raised his brows. He had mistaken her mission, but he answered tolerantly.

"No, lady, I ain't bought no coal and I ain't goin' to, long as they try to stick me two dollars a ton."

"What price were you quoted?"

"Six-fifty in my furnace room. For run-of-mine that's an ungodly price."

"Would you be interested in a price of say five dollars?"

The steward was interested now. "You sellin' coal?"

"Yes."

"Well! I learn somethin' every day. I never seen a lady sellin' coal before. Sure you ain't made a mistake and it's linen you got?"

Jean smiled. "No, it's coal."

They were better friends after that. The steward leaned back. "Sure, I'd be interested. How much you got?"

"How much do you want?"

"Oh, I usually buy a thousand tons at a time. Comes pretty near runnin' me the year."

Jean calculated rapidly. She was getting a hundred tons a week from the Chinquapin. The Mary Ann produced around two hundred. The contract was over three weeks' work. She remembered Bradley's advice about profits.

"I'll quote you four dollars and a half on the order. How's that?"

"Pretty good. In my cellars?"

"Yes, if you'll give me three weeks to deliver."

"Oh, there ain't no hurry. I got enough to keep me goin' for a while. That's why I been waitin'. I never did like bein' held up. What mines do you represent?"

"My own."

Again the steward's brows went up. "You're kind of unusual. Run 'em yourself, I suppose."

"Yes, but it isn't as imposing as it sounds. It's only a couple of little wagon mines out fifteen miles, but it's good Cahaba coal, the best in the district."

"I didn't think you was handlin' Mine Managers' coal. They ain't cuttin' prices to nobody that I can find out. Guess I'll trade. Got any bank references?"

"Of course. Mr. Welton at the Fourth National will vouch for me."

When Jean left she had a signed sales contract for a thousand tons at four dollars and a half, payment on delivery. She was amazed at the ease of it. Why had she never thought of that? She did not trouble to call on the purchasing agent of the Associated Laundry Owners; that could keep for another day. Now she had a particular bit of shopping to do and she luxuriated in the relief from the anxiety that had been her constant companion.

At the city's biggest department store, she called the manager into consultation. "I want a complete outfit for a man," she said. "Shoes, hat, suit, shirts, socks, everything; and I want them good."

The manager asked no questions. She selected one of the clerks who was as near Bradley's build as she could judge and made her purchases. It was some return for Bradley's efforts in her behalf. Suddenly she resolved to ask him to share the profits from this sale. He said they were not partners, but she would not have it so.

SHE was unaccountably eager to get back to the Chinquapin. Never before had it seemed attractive. She did not ask herself what was the magnet that drew her. It didn't seem necessary; all that mattered was that she did want to get back.

Bradley was standing in the door when the bus stopped, and again the firelight threw his figure into relief. There was something steadfast in his quietness and Jean recognized how large a part he was coming to have in her life.

Jean chattered as they ate. She told of her interview with the Twickenham steward and boasted a little about her success. Bradley heard her without comment, but she was not put out by his silence. She was beginning to understand now and to respect his reticence.

After supper she drew him into the living-room. "I've been very extravagant," she said. "You'll scold when you see."

Bradley's voice was astonished. "I scold!"

He smiled a little to himself and Jean changed her tone as she explained. She was a little less assured. She had been engrossed in her own thoughts when she made the purchases. She had not thought how he would take it. But she laid out the things bravely for his inspection.

"You haven't any nice things," she said a little wistfully. She was offering an olive branch if he would only see. "I—I remembered how you used to like—nice things, and it seemed a shame for you to work so hard and—and not have them."

Bradley looked down on the array of masculine finery. "It was kind of you, but I've no right to them now. You should have remembered that."

"Don't you want them?" Jean's tone was hurt.

"Of course." Bradley gathered up the bundles. "Only—only I thought you needed the money for something else. I—I— But thank you, anyway."

Bradley was uncommunicative. Jean had brought him a pipe on one of her trips to Attapulgas. She would have brought cigarettes, but he would not have them. "I've lost my taste for them—among other things," he explained.

Bradley smoked silently and she stared into the fire. Her spirits were a little dashed. She had forsaken her habit of hurrying to bed. Now she often sat late before the fire, mostly in silence, for Bradley talked little. It was only by questions that she could elicit words. And there was so terribly little she could ask about. The prison—she steered clear of that. And the years before—they were gone into the grave of the past never to return. Neither of them could recall those days when money meant nothing and the object of both their lives was amusement. That was how they had drifted apart. At first she had been hurt, then she had not cared. And when the crash came the sole emotion that swept her had been a hot anger that her husband should have betrayed her brother. Her own losses had been secondary.

Bradley stood up at last and knocked the ashes from his pipe. "This is only a beginning," he observed, and went out of the door.

His words were prophetic: Jean's business grew beyond all expectation. But she was not fearful now; she had abandoned all pretense of direction, leaving everything in Bradley's hands and taking no step without consulting him.

She came to recognize the routine. Bradley would appear before her some Saturday night and ask the loan of a hundred dollars. Next morning he would disappear, and when he returned he would give her a contract for the output of some wagon mine. Gradually her operations widened; he bought the output of all the mines on the Warrior Highway, then over on the Iroquois Pike and even to the Coalburg Highway.

Sometimes Jean was terrified as she contemplated the rising tide of coal that she must sell. The Hickory Ash brought a hundred tons a week, Shaleton over the mountain on the Iroquois Pike added two hundred more, the Avondale on the Coalburg Highway, the largest of all, nearly three hundred tons.

AS THE weeks passed, Bradley continued to extend his contracts and operations, and when the winter rush for coal set in Jean was handling nearly fifteen hundred tons a week.

The business was gathering complications that wearied her. It was too elaborate. There was the bookkeeping, the handling of the credit, for sometimes credit was needed. Even with their profits of nearly two thousand dollars a month, credit was necessary. All sales were not easy; sometimes the coal accumulated.

But when she became panic-stricken, Bradley steadied her and pointed out new markets. The small plants around Attapulgas, foundries, machine shops, even at last the laundry owners, she combed for sales; she was more successful than she had dreamed was possible.

The change in their business brought changes in their way of living, but not as many as she would have liked. One of the first things Bradley insisted on was the purchase of a little car for her.

"You are too busy to depend on the Warrior bus," he said when she demurred. "As a matter of fact, I think it would be much wiser for you to let me handle things here and live in Attapulgas. You should open an office there instead of conducting all your business from here."

"Would you come to Attapulgas?"

Bradley shook his head slowly. "It is not possible. I would be recognized. It would hurt your credit, hurt your standing with the people with whom you deal."

Jean was stubborn. "This isn't real; it

won't last; I'll wake up again. And I'm not going to Attapulgas." She shivered. "I don't like the place any better than you."

She purchased the car, but it proved to be a source of pain. Bradley refused to ride with her or use it in any way.

"Come, let's go for a drive," she invited one Sunday afternoon, when the crisp October winds blew off Sand Mountain and the woods were a riot of color in the yellow of the hickory and the green of the pines, with here and there the brown of the oak leaves.

Bradley shook his head. "No, thank you," he said. He offered no explanation.

Jean insisted. "Please!" she begged. "I've a special reason. I've something to show you."

But Bradley was firm. "I am here if you wish to discuss business with me."

At last she yielded and ran the car into the tiny garage he had had built.

She came slowly back to the porch, where he sat looking quietly at her. Suddenly she caught a glimpse of herself. She paused at the foot of the steps and looked up at him. It was much as he had looked at her that day when he came back into her life, hungry, penniless and footsore. She had changed since then; but suddenly she realized that he had not. Perhaps what she would tell him would change him.

On the porch, she opened her hand to show him some papers. She was sober enough now. The grave up on the hillside under the shale prevented levity at such a moment.

"We are clear," she said. Bradley looked at her. "The slate is clean, all the scores paid. You—we—I don't owe a cent."

Bradley's voice was controlled when he spoke. "You mean that the money I took has been restored?"

"No-o, not quite that, but all the debts have been paid. Archie would be happy if he knew. 'A hundred cents on the dollar,' he always said; and that's how it is."

"Money you make now goes to you, then?"

"Us," she corrected.

Bradley spread his hands. "Singular, not plural. I am merely a hired man."

Jean did not argue. She understood a little of his bitterness; she was more understanding now, more tolerant. Money did not mean so much as it had meant once; familiarity had bred contempt.

Bradley no longer worked in the mine. A neat little office had been built near the opening, and there he managed all the paper work of the operation, kept track of the sales, directed the hauling.

Jean often begged him to go to Attapulgas with her, but he never would. "I'm all right here," he said. "That isn't my part. I couldn't do it."

BRADLEY was in the office when the men filed in. He rose to greet them. A small man with a close-cropped white mustache that stood out against his red face was the spokesman.

"We wish to see Mrs. Jean Drew."

"I will call her," said Bradley, and went to the house, where Jean was sewing.

"Some gentlemen to see you in the office," Bradley said, and she laid aside her work with an exclamation.

"Another sale! I'll go right over."

"No, I don't think it's a sale. You'll find them in the office."

He entered the building on her heels and the men rose. The small man introduced himself and the others with easy courtesy.

"My name is Pettypool, Mrs. Drew, Simeon Pettypool. I am president of the Mine Managers' Association. These are my associates on the board of directors: Mr. Prude, Mr. Head, Mr. Burch and Mr. Corenblum."

Jean acknowledged the introductions and sat down at the desk. "Well, gentlemen?" she said pleasantly. She was comfortably secure.

Pettypool's voice was suave. "We came to talk about coal prices—and, incidentally, coal. You have shown us something new in the coal business, Mrs. Drew. Wagon mines have counted for little before this."

Jean looked from Pettypool's red face to Corenblum's heavy one and the lean visage of Burch. She sensed something unpleasant to come. "It is good of you to say so," she murmured.

"Yes, you've shown us something new," resumed Pettypool. "As a matter of fact, you've come pretty near shooting the coal market all to pieces in Attapulgas."

"There is enough business for all of us," she said.

Pettypool shook his head. "No, Mrs. Drew, there isn't and that's what we have some to see you about. We'd like to make some sort of an arrangement."

Bradley was working at his desk unnoticed by any of them. The men perhaps mistook him for a clerk.

"Arrangement!" echoed Jean. "What do you mean?"

"Well, we'd like to buy you out."

Jean looked at Bradley and instantly shook her head. "Thank you, but I'm not in the market."

Pettypool was sympathetic. "Now that's too bad! It's lots the nicest way to get out. Coal brokerage is no business for a woman, anyhow. We'll make you a nice offer."

"My partner and I do not care to sell."

Bradley raised his head at her words. Pettypool was surprised.

"Partner? I did not know you had one."

"Oh, yes!" said Jean.

Pettypool leaned back. "Now that rather complicates matters," he said regretfully. "Are you sure you wouldn't sell?"

"Of course not. Why should I?"

"That's just what I want to tell you, Mrs. Drew. It will be so much nicer if you will just accept what I say as true. Now we don't particularly care about the business you've been getting, though when we got to looking into it, it was considerably more than we had anticipated. It isn't the actual coal that you sell, it's what you're doing to prices. You're causing trouble for all of us. You disarrange the market. We can't have that. It hurts us all and that is what the association is for—to act in cases of that sort."

"But if I don't care to sell? I am operating my own business. If you cannot meet my prices, then—"

"Mrs. Drew, we can meet your prices, but it will cost us more than it would to solve the situation otherwise. It's cheaper to buy you out."

Jean's words were final. "I am not selling, gentlemen."

"Then it's too bad, because we're going to have to kind of take steps to change your views. We've met this kind of situation before, perhaps not exactly in this way, but they all figure down to the same thing. We wanted to treat you nicely, seeing that you are a woman, but the thing can be handled the other way if you wish." He paused and looked about the room. "The men in this room right now control three hundred thousand tons of coal a year and three or four million dollars. That's a pretty hard combination to buck."

His teeth were showing in a pleasant smile under his gray mustache. Jean would have found him less menacing if he had shown more feeling. She gestured a little helplessly.

"Well—"

Bradley rose quietly and walked over to her side. "What he means is that if you don't sell to the association, they'll smash you."

PETTYPOOL turned and surveyed Bradley, who ignored him, his eyes on Jean. Bradley's lips were thin. Jean looked at him in silent appeal. He was more competent to cope with this than she. Pettypool spoke sharply.

"Oh, yes! I almost forgot, Mrs. Drew. There was another thing we wished to speak to you about. It is this man. We have been looking into his record a bit—having it done, that is. His name happens to be Drew, the same as yours."

Bradley straightened and his face paled, but he looked at Pettypool without flinching. He did not see Jean flush indignantly. "Go on," he said quietly.

"I shall," said Pettypool equably. "This man, Mrs. Drew, is a former convict. He was sentenced in this county for forgery and served his term of five years in the mines. Our men have found this by tracing his record and I don't think he will deny it. I feel sure that when you know him, you will no longer wish him to handle your affairs. Is what I say true, my man?"

"Perfectly," answered Bradley.

Pettypool was still suave as he turned back to Jean. "We quite understood that when you suddenly expanded your business that it was not of your own initiative, and we began to look for a reason. We found—him. We had not been unconscious of you, but we are not hogs. As long as you were content to operate in a small way, we didn't object to your making a living out of it. But we can't have any combination of wagon mines. Prices will continue to be held at present levels. As for this man, you will scarcely want a forger to continue in a confidential position."

Jean rose abruptly. Her cheeks were

flushed and her eyes flashed. "He is my husband," she said icily.

Pettypool whistled. Under the exchange he had gradually lost his suavity. Now he dropped diplomacy and spoke savagely.

"We'll give you a week. If you don't sell to us by then, we'll know what to do. We'll give you forty thousand dollars for the whole thing as it stands. As for this man, we know how to handle ex-convicts."

Jean recovered her poise. "Thank you for the warning. It will not be necessary to continue this interview. What you offer is half what the business is worth and, besides, I would not now sell to you under any circumstances."

"Forty thousand dollars is better than nothing," said Pettypool significantly over his shoulder.

Jean did not accompany the men to the door. As they went out, she dropped into a chair and looked at Bradley, whose face was pale. But he turned quietly back to his desk.

"Oh! Did you hear what he said?" Jean cried. "The—the— Oh, as if I cared! Why—"

Bradley looked up. "I did not expect to get away from it," he said. "I have known it was coming. I knew it when I came back here. They told me—down there, the men who had been in two and three times."

Jean put her head in her arms. Her voice was muffled. "If only—"

"He said nothing that was not true. I am an ex-convict. I was sentenced for forgery."

Jean's head was still in her arms. "I had forgotten. I—I never think of it now."

"I wish I could forget," said Bradley sadly.

Jean seemed to feel his words a reproach. "And I did it! I did this to you!" Never before had she so completely given way with him.

Bradley still stood beside the desk.

"That doesn't matter," he said. "It's past and it can't be undone. We haven't time to consider that now. It's immaterial. His threat was not an idle one."

"Can he—can he cut off our markets as he said?"

"Yes, I suppose he can. The Managers' Association is all-powerful once it is aroused. It—it got me before."

Bradley was sitting down, his chin on his breast. He stared straight before him. Slowly his face whitened. The agitation of the inward struggle broke the surface calm and he clenched his hands.

Slowly he rose to his feet. "Where are the keys to your car? Give them to me."

Wonderingly she handed them to him. "Where are you going?"

Bradley's face was gray. "To Attapulgas to find a way out."

He left without looking back.

IT WAS late when Jean heard the little car roar into the clearing and stop; then Bradley's solid step on the porch. But she was waiting for him when he came in. His face was white and he was weary. She would not allow him to talk.

"Come into the dining-room," she said. "You can tell me about it afterward."

Bradley ate listlessly, his eyes meditative. "I've got a lead," he said at last.

Jean patted his hand. It was the first time she had touched him. Jean did not greatly care for the coal, if only she could break down the wall of his reserve. Jean had changed in the hours she had waited. The savage sneer of red-faced Pettypool had struck a spark to flame that had been smoldering unrecognized below the surface.

"He is my husband," she had told Pettypool, and now she realized that she had not said it defensively, but proudly. She had not cared for the man who had been her husband years ago; but this self-contained, silent figure, who labored so tirelessly – How different! Thinking these things, she touched his hand in silent sympathy; but he ignored it.

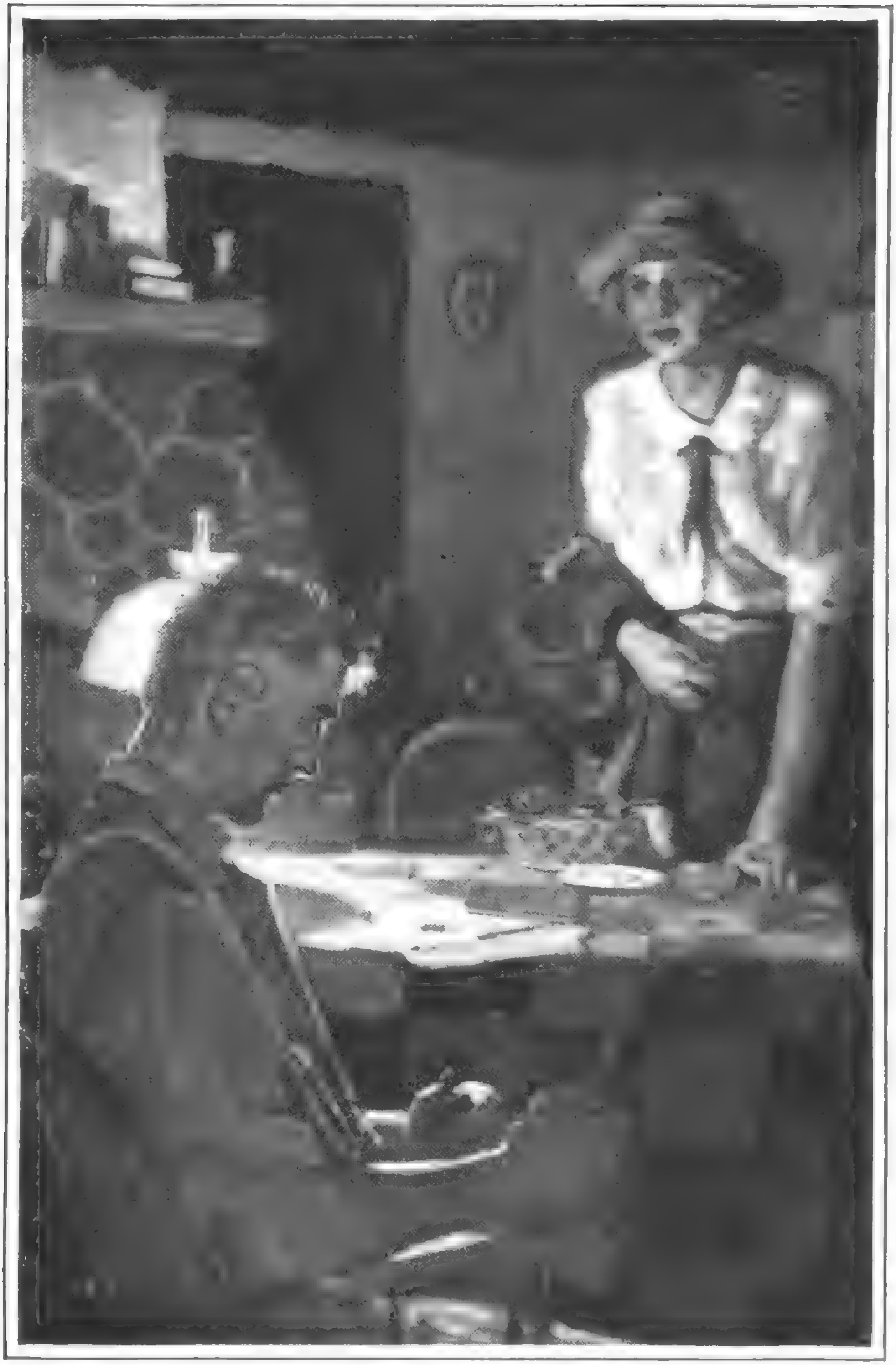
"I've got a lead," he said, "and one they can't touch."

She drew closer. "Tell me," she whispered.

"I haven't worked out the details, but we have a week to do that. We'll beat them to the punch and it's something they have never heard of, a new move. You've heard of Louis David?"

"The department-store man? Of course."

"I went to him and laid all my cards on the table. He heard me out and he's willing to gamble. We'll have to. I'm going to sell coal through his store. He advertises me and vouches for me and I sell the coal way under the market, but still at a better profit than we are making. They



Jean paused and looked down on him gravely. "Once I thought you might—might forgive and see what I— I offered; but I suppose that was asking too much."

can't touch David; he'll match money with any of them. It's our only salvation. The Managers can absolutely close the industrial markets to us—even the little ones we've been dealing with."

"You are going back tomorrow?"

He shivered. "Yes. I'll have to," he answered reluctantly. "It's something I'm afraid you couldn't manage. And if this works, you'll be independent and I'll be free."

Jean looked blank.. "Free!" she echoed.

Bradley gazed at her. "Yes. My second sentence will be over."

"Second sentence? You speak in riddles."

His voice was weary. "The five years—down there was not all the sentence imposed on me. That was but half—the easier half."

Jean's face was white. "What do you mean?"

"Did you think it was easy to come back here where I had once been—been—well, to come back here as an ex-convict, the marks of the whip on my body? come back to—to you, when I knew how you felt?" He smiled faintly. "The hell of—down there was easy beside that."

"Then why—why did you come?"

"To win my freedom, of course. I assure you it was not because I thought you cared. It was selfish, perhaps, but I'm young yet and I wanted freedom from reproach to myself. You see, if I had left the prison and just gone away and never heard from you again, I would always have had the consciousness that I lost your money for you and that I was responsible for whatever was happening to you. Don't you see that—that it was the desire for freedom from my thoughts that brought me back? And I can't go away until I recover your money for you."

"And you—you want to go?"

Bradley's smile was mirthless. "Yes, I want to go out somewhere and lose myself and start over again. Maybe I won't make such a mess of things again. Anyway—I'll be wiser."

BRADLEY looked down at his hands, crossed before him. It was a trick that still clung to him, that posture, erect, hands folded before him, looking straight ahead.

"I've tried not to be bitter and I think I've succeeded. But I'd like a chance to forget it all. You see, it wasn't the prison, nor the shame of it all, that broke me. It was the fact that you left me to the silences—alone, not a word, not a line—I knew nothing. I was helpless and you left me there to wonder for five years."

His eyes were sad as he looked at her. She gazed back, her face strained. Her voice was almost a whisper when she spoke. "Oh! And I did that to you! It wasn't right! And I never can undo it!"

Bradley shook his head regretfully. "No, those—those—five years of that— It's hard, but you'll forget."

Jean's voice was faintly hoarse. "You didn't come back to punish me?"

Bradley smiled sadly. "Of course not. How would that benefit me?"

"Don't you know you are punishing me more than if you cursed me?"

"Oh, no!"

"But you are. Don't you know that when you are gone, I'll remember that I owe it all to you, that you requited me like—like this. I couldn't bear it!"

"You won't feel so after I'm gone. Things will be different then. You'll go back to Attapulgas or somewhere else and forget. You can forget, you know. You did for five years."

Jean gasped at the simple speech. It was not a reproach and it hurt the more because of that. "You had a right to say that. I know it seems so to you. And I can't ever explain; you wouldn't believe me."

Abruptly her head went into her arms; her shoulders shook in a long shudder. Bradley looked on with set face. Repression—that was what he had learned—down there. One judged the future by the past; and his past with her . . . She was sorry. She had been overmuch alone. Perhaps he had left her too long to thought. He watched her from grave eyes and did not touch her. He could not bear that. . . .

When Jean raised her head the tears were rolling down her cheeks unchecked, but her voice held without a quiver. "And you thought I did it because of the money?"

Bradley threw out his hand. "The past—You were so angry when I lost yours that you—"

"Can't you ever forget that?" It was a desperate plea.

Bradley shook his head. "I wish I could," he said in a tense whisper. "Oh, my God! I wish I could!"

ONCE away from the Chinquapin, Bradley spent little time at the mine. He was busy in town. Jean asked him nothing about the progress of the business. Abruptly she surrendered all care of it to him. She remained at the Chinquapin, white-faced, desperate, hopeless, yet determined not to give up without a fight. Surely there must be some way of forgiveness! She had sinned—truly, she had. But . . .

She performed her duties mechanically. Strangely Bradley did not change. He was the same quiet, deliberate, considerate man. His consideration hurt her now. She felt that it was all on the surface.

She was desperately lonely, but Bradley took no notice. He was much in Attapulgas. In some ways the new arrangement was simpler than the old; it concentrated his sales, but it intensified his delivery problems. Orders were small, but the volume was amazing. He had come home early one afternoon to go to the Mary Ann. She passed through the kitchen where he was painstakingly washing his hands and would have hurried out, but he stopped her.

"We are over the hill," he said soberly.

"Yes," she answered listlessly.

"Yes, all over," he continued. "Last week we sold more than we could produce and all through David's store. It's getting bigger; I'm going over to speed up the Mary Ann. Know what we're making now? Over two thousand a week."

He went out and Jean set about preparing supper. She still refused a maid. She did not know why, but she could not bear even a servant to see her unhappiness.

If she could only make up to Bradley! But five years of silence—she had not thought he cared. Her brother said . . . And she had worshiped Archie. That was why she had not written. A slow resentment against her brother burned in her breast. He had been so implacable. But five years! She had not known Bradley could not write. She had thought that he would not. And now . . .

She waited for the issue that she knew was inevitable. She thought long over what she would do, and when it came she was ready.

Bradley, home early from Attapulgas in his own car—he had one now; Jean had insisted on that—sat smoking under the lamp in the living-room and looking carefully over papers which he shuffled before him. Jean was sewing on the other side of the fire; the evenings were chill. From time to time she glanced at him, and presently he spoke casually.

"Well, we have come to the end of the road."

Jean laid aside her sewing; she did not pretend to misunderstand. "You have something to say?" she asked.

Bradley nodded in satisfaction. "I have—what I came back from—down there to say." He patted the papers before him and asked a question. "How much—how much was it that you lost?"

"Sixty-four thousand dollars," Jean answered slowly. Her brother had made her familiar with the figures.

"And eight per cent on that amount for five years is $25,600, making a total of $89,600. Here it is."

He tossed a bank book into her lap and she looked at it curiously: it meant nothing to her. Bradley stretched wearily and sighed. "You never thought you'd get it back, did you?"

JEAN opened the book idly. She was thinking as she looked at the imposing figures on deposit.

"How did you do it so quickly?" she asked.

"Sold out the business. Good will, methods, contracts—everything except the Chinquapin. That's yours."

"Sold? To whom?"

"Louis David. I'm through." His voice was tired and he rested his head on his hands for a moment before he spoke again. "I am surprised. I thought you would be—pleased."

"I am pleased—for you. And now you are—are going?"

"Yes, the slate is wiped clean. I'm down to bedrock. I can rest easily."

"And what of me?"

He stared at her somberly. "You are free, too. Ninety thousand dollars. That makes you independent: cities; travel; anything."

"And you?"

He gestured vaguely. "I don't know. I haven't had time to think of that yet. I'll go—out somewhere and start over."

Jean laid aside her sewing and rose quietly. She had lived this moment in anticipation; she knew exactly what she would do.

"No, Bradley, you are not going," she said. "I am going. Keep the money, or give me what the Chinquapin will bring. It is only justice."

He stared at her. "I stay here? Oh, no!"

"Yes, you will stay here. Louis David wants you. He knows about—down there, and he doesn't care. You haven't told me much, but I know that. You wish to stay here and it is only right that I go." She paused and then asked wistfully, "Will it make up to you a little of the five years?"

He said nothing and she left him to go into her bedroom, returning in a moment with hat and cloak. At the table she paused and looked down on him gravely.

"I have been thinking. It is I who am the exile. Once I thought you might—might forgive and see what I—I offered; but I suppose that was asking too much. Women make mistakes, just like men, but they aren't forgiven so easily. You were brave and I'll try to be, too. Once I thought you went out of my life, but you came back. Now it is my time to go. Those five years— You couldn't understand, but it was because I loved Archie that I did not write. It wasn't myself. I was bitter for him and—and when he died it—it didn't seem worth while. I didn't think you— I don't care anything about the money. I've lost all that I ever hoped to regain from you. It is just and I accept it."

He sat unstirring, wordless, striving to read her thoughts. Her voice was resigned when she resumed.

"Perhaps — sometime — somewhere you might—might understand and be able to forgive. If you do, I'll be waiting out there. I'm sorry about those five years, but sorrow doesn't help when it is too late. I'm going now, driving to Attapulgas. I'll be there for a few days until you settle things about the Chinquapin—" She held out her hand. "Won't you say good-by?"

His lips twisted in a wry smile. "The end of the road. But you'll take the money."

"No. Not now or ever. Good-by, and remember that if you ever want me . . . I'll be waiting—if you come."

WORDLESSLY he watched her go to the door, listened as the roar of the engine of her car filled the room; then he rose absently and picked up the bank book from where it had fallen. He gazed down at the mocking figures and suddenly hurled the book savagely from him.

He sat down again with his head in his arms. Once he rose and listened, but there was nothing. He wandered into the dining-room and out again, then into another room—her room, just as she had left it. It was the first time he had crossed the threshold. Her presence was everywhere.

He was diffident as he wandered to the table; a glove lay carelessly on the edge; a half-opened drawer revealed lingerie. She had gone just as he had come—empty-handed. Abruptly his thoughts went back to the night when she had brought him clothes.

Face downward on her dresser was a picture. He turned it over and his own face stared back at him. Beside the picture was a handkerchief with a knot in the corner. As he lifted it, there was a rustle as of dry leaves and very faintly he caught the fragrance of sweet shrub.

The house was dreadfully still. Suddenly it seemed inanimate. It had never been so when she was there. Her very presence vivified it. Somehow he had not thought he would feel like this.

Five years! What did that matter when life was before them? Forget? Why, of course he could!

He looked at his watch. Fifteen minutes since she had gone. His car—outside. What was it she had said? She would be—waiting out there. He could overtake her. Fool! Why did he hesitate?

A door slammed. There was the clatter of an overturned chair and the house settled back to quiet. From outside, in the night, came the sound of a man's footsteps—running.

THE END

The Red in the Devil's Hair

In Which the Village Brigadier of Police Puts One Over on the Central Office

By Karl W. Detzer

BRIGADIER BONNET took two worries to bed with him. As chief of the Coutras post of the Gendarmerie Nationale, he rarely had a trouble to vex his head—but tonight two of them! He stood at his window, looking down upon the courtyard, the tassel of his green nightcap bobbing over his right ear. Below him a light in the window of the guard room told him that old Papa Larue, second in command, was still on duty; in another half-hour he too would have made his evening inspection of the Coutras public square and the town would be silent.

There was rain in the air; a storm was threatening, the brigadier told himself as he shut the window and blew out his candle. Once before he turned to his high, feather-quilted bed, he glanced through the pane at a light still burning far across town and up the hill. It was not unusual to see a lamp in the window of Professor Rainault's laboratory; but tonight it worried the brigadier. Besides, there was the telegram on his desk downstairs, the message from the Paris commander, telling him to keep his eyes open for that bold scamp, the Red-haired Devil.

"You are like a cat tonight," Madame Bonnet told her husband, "prowling about as if you fear every sound!"

"Yes, my wife," he admitted, "I am worried about Professor Rainault. If he would permit me to stay there with him—"

"But he refuses! Then you had best be in bed where honest men belong. If he cannot be trusted with his medallions, then he'd lose them later. Why not now?"

Brigadier Bonnet had been a soldier and had studied tactics in the school at Angers; he knew when it was wise to withdraw. So he closed his eyes and worried in silence until the rain flashed against the windows and dripping eaves urged him to sleep.

It was gloomy and cold in the village. Papa Larue made his tour of inspection on the public square and hurried back to the gendarmerie just as the first rain splattered down. He had uncased his inkwell to sign the day's report, when a loud rapping at the outer door opened his sleepy eyes.

Papa Larue grumbled. Ten minutes and he would have been snoring in bed. He opened the door grudgingly to admit into the light a breathless young peasant, a square-headed fellow, in clothes shaken awry by running.

"You, Bertrand!" Papa Larue recognized the youth as a son of the town miller. "What now?"

"Saints spare me!" The boy crowded into the door, closing it after him as if trying to shut out the night. "I have run all the way! I have been to Périgueux—I came back on the night train. I started to walk home from the station. At the bridge I turned from the road to the footpath along the river. There in the mud—oh, monsieur, it was terrible!—I found a man."

"A man?" Papa Larue's voice was pitched higher than he wished it. "Then why all this? What said he?"

"Said? Monsieur, he was dead!"

The clock ticked around thirty seconds with a precise staccato. Papa Larue, his white mustaches branching out like dove's wings, his little, round nose blotched purple and red, his old shoulders sunken behind the *médaille militaire*, stood blinking into the scared eyes of the younger man.

"I'll call the brigadier," he replied after a moment. "It is a case for him, not me." He paused, disconcerted, with his hand on the latch. "You are sure he was dead?"

"With blood on his neck!" the peasant lad said, and felt his own throat, as if it, too, might be streaked.

Brigadier Bonnet, awakened by the bell which Larue pulled jerkily with a wire at the foot of the stair, heard the old man's news and returned to his room. He lighted the candle, then crossed to the window and looked out.

The light still burned on the hill above the town. Professor Rainault was not abed yet; at least he had not thought to turn down his lamp. The brigadier dressed slowly, fastening the interminable array of buttons that are the curse of a gendarme's life. He answered his wife shortly, reminding her that he was a good husband, of proven character, and that affairs of the police were bad for the female mind.

THE rain was streaking down with a fresh exuberance when the trio, Bonnet, Larue and young Bertrand, left the courtyard; nor did it slacken while they crossed the town, circled the bridge, and stumbled through the mud along the river bank. They had moved forward about a hundred meters, guided by the uncertain flare of a lantern in the hands of old Larue, when Bertrand hesitated, moved forward a step, and fell back behind the others.

"I saw him plain before. There he is—I lighted a match."

He pointed toward the path, five paces ahead. Brigadier Bonnet remembered that he was a soldier and stepped out first. At his heels Papa Larue approached stolidly.

There on the ground, flung down like a drenched and soggy roll of sacking, lay the body of a man. His face was in a pool of muddy water, and a great green coat, with a military cut, covered the upper half of his huddled body. It was not a large body. Pipestem legs, twisted as if he had been tripped in some hilarious dance, stuck out from the lower folds, and above, half covered by a full hood, the lantern showed a thick mass of brick-red hair.

"Living saints!" whispered Papa Larue.

"Ho!" sang out Brigadier Bonnet. "It is he! It can't be he!"

"The Red-haired Devil!" answered Larue, finding his voice.

Bonnet reached over and touched one of the hands, stretched out at the side, open palm up, making a basin for the rain.

"He is cold!" the brigadier announced. "He has been dead some hours. It must be the one! Hair the color of fire—and they said he was in this district!"

It was not an everyday occurrence, finding dead men in Coutras. Brigadier Bonnet, priding himself on his nerves, turned the body over. It was fine cloth in the coat. He touched the hood, pulling it down from the face and neck. There was dried blood upon the white skin. The face was puffed, twisted to one side, so mashed it would be hard to identify.

"Some one has used a club—ugh!" Bonnet straightened up.

"The first blow did it. You think—" Papa Larue tried to think on his own account. It was after twelve, raining, and his bedtime. "You think perhaps he was trailing some one, with mischief in his mind? His victim struck first?"

Bonnet did not answer for a moment. He was bent over, his hand under the folds of the coat.

"Look at this! He has been robbed! His pockets are inside out!"

Papa Larue peered around the thick bulk of his chief.

"Retribution!" he exclaimed in a short voice. "The robber robbed!"

"Then there is a second villain in our district, my good Larue!" exclaimed the brigadier, and after a moment he swore quietly, the precise, short oath of a man of arms. He remembered his second worry. "It's those golden medallions," he growled. "I knew that there would be trouble when the affair got into the newspapers. If Professor Rainault had taken my advice—" He stopped, finishing the sentence with a wave of his square hand.

"Bring the mayor and the priest," he directed Papa Larue. "This is their job as well as ours. And tell them that snails are made to eat, not to imitate. I must get through here and go to Rainault. They are babies, those professors, in the hands of a strong man. What would he stop at, the fellow who did this?" He turned his light on the bloody face. "What would he stop at for Rainault's seven silly pieces of gold?"

The brigadier took the lantern. Bertrand remained with him, not wholly liking the vigil he helped to keep. For a drenching hour they waited by the body, the brigadier and the miller's son, while the rain streaked down harder and a puffy wind came out of the north, bustling through the willows on the river bank. The town clock in the old Hôtel de Ville struck a melancholy three-quarters past midnight. Then came the mayor and the priest, back with Papa Larue. They all uncovered to the dripping sky, while the priest, a grayish man, went hurriedly about his simple rites; that done, the mayor stepped forward. He was fat, as is the habit of provincial office holders, a bit blustery and sure of his words.

"I have brought news, brigadier," he announced.

"Better have brought a wagon!" Bonnet answered.

"Papa Larue saw to that. I had bigger affairs. Your chief, Soul, the Paris inspector, came in on the midnight train."

Brigadier Bonnet raised his lantern so that its light struck the mayor's face.

"The Paris inspector?" he exclaimed.

"Found your post as black as the inside of a stoppered barrel," the mayor said severely. "Asked your salty old wife where you were and she told him minding your own business, like all decent men that time of night. She slammed the window—"

"But what does he want here?" Bonnet interrupted.

"Professor Rainault. He crossed the street to ask me—I was still hard at work, brigadier! When I told him where the old fossil lived, off he went as if he had one second to get there."

BONNET pondered. This was indeed most unfortunate, having the inspector and a murder the same night. The Paris inspector come to Coutras! Never before had that happened in the seven years he had been brigadier, and no one at the gendarmerie! Then he remembered who was dead.

"Get this fellow up to the road first," he directed. "We'll see about the inspector later. If you will give a hand, Monsieur Mayor, and you, Bertrand?"

Papa Larue already had stooped over and lifted one of the dead man's shoulders. The mayor hesitated, swallowed his fear, and tried to suppress it with a laugh, that seemed to start in his throat and end there.

Bonnet took the right shoulder, Larue the left; the other pair lifted gingerly at the feet. But as they raised their burden from the mud, the head dropped forward, and the red hair, that had been so terrifying in the lantern light, slid off a bald scalp. It was a wig.

The brigadier whistled. Papa Larue nearly dropped his share of the unpleasant load.

"So that's it!" Bonnet bent down and picked the hair from the puddle of rain water where it had fallen. He shook the moisture from the thick red curls. They were neatly made curls. Brigadier Bonnet looked at them carefully, then folded the wig and stowed it away in an inside pocket.

"I understand this red-headed business better now," he said, and left the mayor to guess what he meant.

The creak of wheels sounded at the end of the bridge. They struggled up the slippery, muddy bank, all four panting, and the priest intoning gently as he marched ahead. The body fitted nicely on the floor of the cart. The priest climbed up by the driver, while the mayor, Papa Larue and the miller's son, who had been asked to go with them to put his statement on paper, trudged at the tailboard. They were halfway to town before Brigadier Bonnet asked any of the questions that were boiling under his flat blue cap. Then he inquired:

"Monsieur Mayor, did the Paris inspector mention the Red-haired Devil?"

"He mentioned nothing." The mayor spoke irritably. He did not relish his place behind the cart, with the lantern spraying its light into the box in front of him.

"Not even Professor Rainault's medallions?"

"Of course, Rainault! He asked me where the fellow lived who had the old money all the papers have been making such a fuss about. I told him no honest man could believe what the papers said. Seven dirty coins, they look like to me! How can they be worth a hundred thousand francs, buried all these years in the earth, wherever it was he dug them up?"

"The Red-haired Devil believed the papers," Bonnet put in, "and here he is, bald as a monk and his face pushed flat! Some one else believed them, or why would he come all the way from Paris to sit up there with Professor Rainault? It's well Rainault will let some one in. He wouldn't have me!"

"But he has many visitors." The priest turned around on the seat. "Almost every day some one of my brothers stops at my house to ask me concerning him."

"And what protection is a visiting priest, Monsieur Curé?" Bonnet asked politely. "What can such a one do, with his beads and his cassock, when there is this sort of thing about?" The brigadier waved his hand toward the dead body in the wagon.

The mortuary cart creaked up to the door of the gendarmerie. Brigadier Bonnet, without helping to unload, touched two fingers to his cap and marched away. In his hand he carried the lantern. It was a rocky path to Professor Rainault's farm, winding up the hills above the river valley, hard walking even by day; in the dark treacherous.

Who would live there! No one unless he were a fool or a professor, Brigadier Bonnet told himself fiercely. It was a pitiful old estate, not large enough to call a castle, too turreted to be a farm; and no neighbors. Brigadier Bonnet, splashing off the path into cold, muddy water, guessed shrewdly that this was the very reason old Rainault lived where he did—no neighbors; he could sit up all night if he wished, figuring out his silly inscriptions.

He knew little of the man, in spite of being brigadier. Neither did the villagers, except that the name of Rainault appeared often in the papers, that he stayed up at night like an owl, that he talked to himself when he walked the roads at dusk, and oftener than not did not reply to their salutations. They put him down for a crank and did not bother their simple, provincial heads about him: let the others worry, those important gentlemen who always were stopping off at the railroad, much excited, and inquiring the way to the laboratory, three days after there had been some queer piece in the papers.

COUTRAS had read a good deal about the professor after this last find. Not only was it of immense historical value, said the papers, but the medallions were of hammered gold, set with fine stones, and worth a fortune as old metal and gems if nothing else. Professor Rainault had dug them out of the cellar of an abandoned monastery down in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

And now Inspector Soul, chief of the Paris police, journeyed to Coutras on the heels of the Red-haired Devil! Brigadier Bonnet was elated. For not an hour before, there under his very nose, had been explained the mystery of this famous man with the brick-red head. An astute criminal, this fellow, never seen except in the act of committing a crime. One day the countryside would be quiet. The next this Red-haired Devil appeared out of nowhere, took what he wanted, usually jewels, bowed, and disappeared. A hundred police might track the country over—but never a sign of him would they find until somewhere, far off, up popped his red head again.

Now he was dead. That in itself was enough to be thankful for. But more than that—Brigadier Bonnet of the Coutras post had uncovered his trickery while he lay in the mud by the Dordogne. The red head, that nightmare of the police, had been a camouflage. How simple it was, now that it had been explained! Brigadier Bonnet chuckled.

He was really bald, this Red-haired Devil. But instead of giving his wicked deeds away, his hairless pate protected him. At the hour for his crime he put on his disguise, sauntered into a town, took what he wanted, and immediately after he became once more a bald-headed man. A capital criminal, thought Brigadier Bonnet; a fellow worthy of his crimes!

The policeman turned from the main road, and began to climb the rocky path. The window shone more brightly just above him now; he was short of breath as he passed through the open gates and walked up the front approach. At the door he held his lantern in the air, seeking the knocker. A brass handle, attached to a wire, hung shoulder-high. He pulled it, and a bell tinkled somewhere far back in the old stone building.

There was no reply. Over to the right, in an awkward, outflung wing of the house, a single window pitted the dark with lamp glow. Brigadier Bonnet waited. Rain, complaining through loose spouts, and spattering down on the flagstone yard, contended with a sighing wind against the stillness. Bonnet jerked the handle again, grumbling into the collar of his tunic.

Three times and a fourth he had rung before a nervous, hurried shuffle sounded on the stone floor inside the house.

"It's the police," shouted the brigadier in reply to a challenge.

Professor Rainault opened the door, candle in hand. He was a short, meager, underfed man, just over the edge of middle age. His clothes fitted him loosely, and were bagged and spotted by constant wear. Plainly, too, he needed sleep.

"I have come to pay my respects to Inspector Soul," Brigadier Bonnet said stiffly, "and bring to him news."

"Inspector Soul?" Professor Rainault stood blinking doubtfully through square-paned spectacles. "Come in," he thought to add. "You are wet as a duck pond!"

The brigadier stepped into the entry, a damp, stone-lined passage, bare as a cave. Cold air puffed draftily through it, tormenting the candle which the professor shielded with a coat lapel. Beyond, a lighted doorway led to the laboratory, where twigs crackled on the hearth and a shaded lamp spread a dusty glow across the floor. Two men were talking. Brigadier Bonnet looked inquiringly at Professor Rainault.

"I have two guests." Rainault showed a nervous desire to get back to them. "Father Roquet, a priest from Toulouse, and another gentleman, a student, who came in on the night train from Paris."

INSIDE Brigadier Bonnet stopped so suddenly that Rainault, following shortsightedly behind him, bumped his nose. What the Brigadier saw cooled all the blood in his body.

Steaming his wet feet by the professor's fire, across the hearth from a round-shouldered, robust priest, sat a man in citizen's clothes whose thick top of hair was a match in color for Madame Bonnet's reddest flannel petticoat.

Inspector Soul? Brigadier Bonnet had to squeeze his fists to make sure the evening's events were not a particularly bloody nightmare. He was awake, all right. Here in his pocket was a red, soggy wig to prove it. He stepped forward, conscious that Rainault and his guests were annoyed at his interruption, and saluted in precisely the way he should.

"Inspector Soul?" he asked sharply.

"This is Bonnet, chief of the local gendarmerie," the professor started to explain at his back. "Brigadier Bonnet, I beg you first greet Monsieur the Curé Roquet, the distinguished historian from the University of Toulouse, and then Professor Soul, a student from Paris."

"Inspector Soul, a policeman from Paris," Brigadier Bonnet corrected him.

The Curé Roquet, who until now had lounged in his chair dispiritedly, leaned forward, his eyes and mouth both swollen suddenly large. Professor Rainault exclaimed. His red-headed guest shrugged good-humoredly.

"You have a meddling finger, brigadier!" he said, with a laugh that burned Bonnet's face. "Professor, I confess. I *am* a police officer, just like the gendarme here. I came into town tonight on business—that may or may not have to do with your precious medallions. Of course, being inspector, I can't have all the town poking its nose in on my work. So when you supposed me a student—"

"Then you are not really interested in deciphering our inscriptions!" The Toulouse historian frowned and took off his spectacles. His face looked round and fat without them, more so because he was almost bald. Properly speaking he had no hair at all, only a black fringe that hung around his head like a lace trimming. He waved his glasses, with an open show of annoyance, toward a long desk piled with books and manuscript. On top of the stack a golden disk gleamed like a cat's eyes in the dark. It was a heavy piece, as large as a man's palm, wrought generously of metal, with stones about its edge. Brigadier Bonnet, seeing it for the first time, clucked his tongue.

"Interested? Of course!"

Brigadier Bonnet looked squarely into the police inspector's face as the other spoke. It was a slender, carefully shaven, almost a peaked countenance for an officer, as if he had kept books instead of riding all day in the wind. Bonnet wiped the rain from his own hard cheeks. So far he set no great stock in this superior. He wore baggy breeches, instead of a proper uniform, a string of a green tie, the clothes of any prosperous farmer on a holiday. The brigadier turned in time to see the Curé Roquet staring at the red head as hard as he.

"Any intelligent man would be interested," the inspector was saying, "the police as much as any one else. Here we are, two of us, myself and our good brigadier"—he saluted the gendarme with exaggerated courtesy—"climbing your treacherous path on a wet night to give you protection."

"I do not need protection!" the professor interrupted.

"He objects to our intrusion!" Inspector Soul held his sides and laughed.

"Your pardon, officer!" Rainault was embarrassed. "I welcome any servant of France. But on the other hand, Father Roquet and I have only a short time together. He honors me by coming. I had wanted to meet him, to have his help in deciphering these inscriptions, ever since I read of his own excavations."

The visiting priest made a gesture begging him to stop. He said earnestly:

"You flatter me, professor. Our first concern is the safety of the medallions."

"JUST a moment!" Brigadier Bonnet moved nearer the hearth, where a better light let him watch more shrewdly the Paris inspector's face. "I bring news. This morning, Monsieur Rainault, I told you that you were foolish to keep your medallions here. I invited you to bring them to the gendarmerie, where we could watch over them."

"I cannot work there! I have them hidden—one is on the table and the other six where I alone know."

"I told you, too," the brigadier continued, "that I had word from my chief in Paris—I had never met you then, Monsieur Soul—that the Red-haired Devil was operating in my neighborhood."

The Curé Roquet gave a start. He looked apprehensively at the head of Inspector Soul.

"So he is," the latter admitted. "It was to discover him that I came. You had never heard of him, Professor Rainault? You have, Monsieur Curé; you come from Toulouse."

"It was he," rejoined the priest, "who ran off with the church plate at Orleans!"

Brigadier Bonnet looked from one visitor to the other and back again to Professor Rainault.

"The Red-haired Devil is dead," he announced with short emphasis, adding: "He was murdered!"

"Murdered?" Father Roquet and Inspector Soul both exclaimed at once and both warmly.

"Murdered?" the priest repeated, and then crossed himself devoutly, as if ashamed of his belated piety.

"How do you know?" challenged the inspector.

Brigadier Bonnet pulled the red wig from his inside pocket and dropped it upon the table close to the gold medallion. Professor Rainault drew back his hand. Father Roquet, bolder, being accustomed to death beds, moved over and examined it, his fringe of black hair close to the lamp. When he had finished he picked it up by a wet lock and passed it to Inspector Soul.

"There's his disguise, the cunning rascal!" grunted the brigadier. "And just now he lies on the floor of the gendarmerie, blue as a clam. There is some other robber about tonight!"

"What mean you?" demanded the inspector. "Some other robber?"

"Simply that men aren't murdered and thrown down a river bank by goose girls or notaries! No! And this Red-haired Devil was murdered! So who killed him?" Bonnet lifted his voice as if he were reading a proclamation in the public square, a duty that was often his to perform. "What brought him here at first? Your rubbish, Professor Rainault, your seven silly pieces of spoiled money! And some one else is after them, too, badly enough to go pugging through the pockets of a corpse! Who would do that except another thief?"

Professor Rainault was impressed.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked nervously.

"Go down to the *poste de police* with the gendarme," Inspector Soul interrupted. "Take your medallions with you."

"You may come to my own house, you and Monsieur the Curé," Bonnet interrupted. "You may use the kitchen table and stay up as late as you want. My good wife will not object, if you brush your shoes before you come in."

"But the other six are buried," Professor Rainault objected.

"Dig them up then." Inspector Soul spoke for the first time with command. "Here is your evidence, brigadier." He handled the wet hair indifferently. "And now let us get along. We have no time to waste up here. There is still the body to be examined at the gendarmerie, the man positively identified, and a search made for his murderer."

Professor Rainault looked uncertainly at Father Roquet. The churchman seemed puzzled.

"I believe they are right, my friend," he agreed at length. "Let us take the medallions to the gendarmerie and we will all rest safer."

"They are buried under a loose stone at the gate," Rainault confessed irresolutely. "Isn't that safe enough, brigadier?"

Brigadier Bonnet did not answer. He stood on the hearth, staring with surprised eyes at the red wig which Inspector Soul had handed him. He held it upside down, examined the inside, rubbed the thin cloth where spurious hair grew out so fertilely. Then he looked at his superior from Paris.

Inspector Soul was bent over, lacing his shoes that had dried by the fire. His red hair flamed up impudently. Bonnet, swallowing a satisfied grunt, looked suspiciously from it to the gray head of Professor Rainault, and the thin black hair of the Toulouse historian.

"You'll bring shovels, monsieur?" he asked brusquely. "And a lantern? You don't expect us to search in the dark?"

PROFESSOR RAINAULT, thinking that Brigadier Bonnet was too short in his speech, brought two shovels, and then a lantern from his own room, an old square tin affair with a candle in it, that freckled the floor with spots of light. Inspector Soul seemed to have lost interest in the value of ancient medallions, now that the Red-haired Devil was reported dead. He had put on a rubber Mother Hubbard coat and was hunting his black umbrella, while he bantered with the priest for coming without one.

They discovered that the rain had slackened when they opened the outside door. But a fine mist still blew down the wind and the eaves and gutter spouts persisted in their melancholy rattle. Brigadier Bonnet followed the other three across the kitchen garden to the rear gate. There, while Father Roquet held the lantern, Professor Rainault and Inspector Soul pried with the shovels at the limestone flagging.

A small metal box, covered with mud, lay in the earth as the stone eased out. Brigadier Bonnet grunted. Why should any sane man stiffen his knees in the rain for the sake of the scribbling on medallions a thousand years old? Better be an honest fellow of arms!

At the same instant the lantern smashed on the stones as if Father Roquet had dropped it. There was a frightened shout, confusion, and two pistol shots.

"A light, Rainault!" Bonnet shouted. "Light the lantern, quick!"

The gate banged, as if some one were trying to push through it.

"Living saints!" the priest from Toulouse was screaming irreverently. "Help, help! The fellow is breaking my head!"

Professor Rainault spilled his box of matches into a puddle of water and ran frantically to the house for another light. His guests were still screaming when he panted back. Brigadier Bonnet, freeing his legs from Father Roquet's full skirts, was jerking the churchman to his unsteady feet. Inspector Soul sprawled on his face beside the masonry; a police revolver lay in the mud near one of his outstretched arms.

"Stand up, so! And lift your hands forward!" Brigadier Bonnet bade the priest politely, in a voice that had the crackle of the military camp behind it.

"Is this a way to treat the clergy?" The Curé Roquet twitched his arm under the gendarme's grip.

"You forget yourself, brigadier!" Professor Rainault protested.

"Jerk off his cassock," Bonnet directed. "As I tell you!" He rapped out the command; Professor Rainault, unaccustomed to maltreating the church or its servants, had hesitated.

The cassock ripped off. Beneath it, strung about the robust waist by a leather belt, a pistol holster and a bulging canvas sack hung to the visitor's loins.

"Take off the pistol. Good! I felt it, scamp, when you bumped into me just now. That sack, too—stand aside!"

The brigadier screamed the last, for the Reverend Father Roquet had flung the astonished professor away. There was a rush of feet on the tiled walk, one shot, a sharp beam from a pocket torch, and Inspector Soul, sitting upright in the mud, steadied his aim at the head of Father Roquet. He halted the unfrocked priest in the gate, then bound his wrists with a chain, and fastened it to one of his own with an out-of-date padlock.

"FATHER ROQUET!" cried Professor Rainault, struggling to gather his wits. "Where were you going?"

It was Brigadier Bonnet who answered. Kneeling on the wet walk beside the lantern, he emptied the sack he had confiscated. In it was a mildewed metal box.

"Your friend Roquet is dead, professor," Bonnet explained gravely. "Your guest tonight has been the Red-haired Devil, a fellow of great wit, who deals in old jewels. He killed the real priest a few hours ago—"

"He killed the priest?"

"As I tell you! Used holy robes to open your door. He killed the priest from Toulouse, dressed in his clothes, and put his own on the body there by the river bank. Even the red wig—ah, you are a clever fellow! Killed off yourself to end the hunt for you!"

"Together we nearly let him get away!" Inspector Soul rubbed off the blood where the stones had cut his face.

"We let him get away?" Brigadier Bonnet puffed out his cheeks. "Not I, monsieur. At first, I admit, I suspected you. Your red head put chills in my feet. And your gentleman's clothes!"

"A visiting detective always wears citizen's clothes, *mon brigadier!*"

"They are too plain! You might have been a notary, for all your looks, not an honest policeman! But then I discovered that the real thief had made one mistake."

"And what was that?" the Red-haired Devil interrupted coolly. "I don't want to make the same mistake twice." He looked younger with the cassock off. His reversed collar flapped awry, one buttonhole torn. The crucifix and rosary still dangled from his neck.

Brigadier Bonnet, who admired superb impudence for its own sake, took from his pocket the wig that he kept for evidence. He turned it inside out, while Inspector Soul pointed his flash.

"His own hair is falling," he explained. "See, Professor Rainault? There, on his nearly bald head, mark how thin it is? He put his wig on the bare scalp of the priest and left some of his own black hairs in the lining. Look, under the lamplight, short, crinkly black? All right, Monsieur Inspector. Let us go back to town, and find a cell for this shorn devil!"

Beginning in January

The Phantom Caravan

By Howard Vincent O'Brien

ONE of last season's best books was "Trodden Gold," by Howard Vincent O'Brien. It was not his first novel, but probably the best until he wrote "The Phantom Caravan." In this he surpasses himself. It is the story of a boy for whom the phantom caravan, that dream of what he would like to be, is prohibited by circumstances. It is not the story of Ammiel Spottswood alone, but of the whole family, and in its truthful interpretation of life, its freshness, its charm, attains a place equaled by few contemporary novels.

January *Everybody's* Out December 15

Both *in the* Money

A Moral for Jockeys: On the Days You Are Riding, Don't Read Your Scented-Envelope Correspondence Until After the Race

By Sam Carson

Illustration by Courtney Allen

WHEN a prize fighter forgets his training, or a traveling salesman passes up a rather important sale, there is something wrong. And in ten cases out of ten, look for the woman.

All of which is an alibi for the conduct of Jerry Malone, who put up such a listless ride at New Orleans one winter afternoon that Popinjay, the public choice, finished fifth in the feature race of the day. Jerry, freckled and bowlegged, was no exception to the rule; he was one of the ten cases; and a dark-haired, brown-eyed miss—Bertha Haddon—back in Louisville was the cause.

Owner William Stanford was irate, as he had just cause to be. Jerry was his contract rider and a good one. But the Popinjay ride gave him cause for alarm. He wanted to know if Jerry had become ill.

"Worse!" Jerry mumbled, as they walked up the track. "My girl threw me down. Just got a letter."

"Uh-huh!" Stanford blinked, a habit he had when under a strain. "Uh-huh. Well, Jerry, the next time you get the air, don't read any letters until after the race. It's too blasted expensive to read 'em before."

That night Jerry reread his letter. He was in his room, with Pudd Martin, a bookmaker, sitting under the light, poring over the morrow's entry list. Jerry's letter was upon violet stationery—almost violent—the handwriting round and a bit scrawly. It was, to Jerry, an astounding missive:

> I don't know what to think at your letter. You said I kissed you just before you left last November. Well, I never did kiss you. What is more, I don't ever intend to. I think your poetry is rotten. Don't bother to answer this, for I want it to be the last one between us. My heart is given to the Flash. And in case that name means nothing to you, it is the nickname of Johnny Meyers. If you worry me again, I'm going to sick Johnny on you. So beware.
>
> B.

"Pudd," Jerry announced gloomily, "I'm off all women for life."

Pudd Martin, who was oversize and round-faced, chuckled appreciatively. "Good idea, for a feller as young as you. You lay off the skirts and you'll be a top notcher, Jerry my boy. Me, I'm gonna be a bachelor for keeps."

"Well, so am I," the jockey asserted. "Say, Pudd, who's the Flash, anyway?"

The bookmaker glanced up with interest. "You don't mean you never heard of Johnny Meyers? Good night! Johnny's ring name is the Flash. He's fighting Benny Wagner Saturday for the lightweight championship—up in New Jersey. What's wrong with the Flash?"

"Not a thing," Jerry replied bitterly, "except he stole my girl."

"Well," Pudd reflected, gazing at Jerry thoughtfully, "if I was you, I'd be a bachelor. Johnny's got a punch as well as speed."

Up in a New Jersey village the Flash, known to his manager as Johnny Meyers, sulked in his training quarters. Nothing Tippy Young, his manager, could do served to arouse the challenger from the depths into which he had sunk. Johnny had been that way all morning, his yet unmarred features set in a fearful scowl. Johnny had received a letter, post-marked Louisville, on pink stationery. It was as fully to the point as the one Jerry Malone had received:

> Mr. Smarty Meyers, I made you no such a promise. I never kissed you in my life, nor promised to marry you if you won the championship. Jerry Malone is my type. I think his blue eyes are awfully nice. He is my sweetheart, if you want to know who. Don't write again. B.

Late that afternoon Johnny Meyers crumpled up the envelope he had been holding so long, and strode into the barn which had been serving as a gymnasium. "Line 'em up, Tippy," he called. "I'm boxing, not playing. I need action."

Thirty minutes later two fatigued members of the training party gave it up. Both had smeared faces and had a new respect for the challenger known as the Flash.

But Johnny, after supper, demanded of Tippy just who Jerry Malone was.

"Jockey," Tippy replied, a bit peevish. "Been leading down at New Orleans. That is, he was leading until I picked on one of his mounts—Popinjay—to win. Then he put up such a rotten ride that the papers howled. Tha's all I know. Why?"

"I can tell you that better when I meet the gentleman," Johnny answered vaguely.

OH, YES, the traveling salesman was the tenth man, or maybe the first. It is a matter of viewpoint. Lester Harrison drove into Coalmont, a mining village in the eastern Kentucky field, early the same afternoon, parked his old flivver at the one garage and struck out for the mine commissary. Lester had been informed that there was a big order waiting. He decided to stop at the hotel to call for any mail which might have been forwarded. There were his pay check, two bills and a square envelope, creamy white. This Lester opened first. He was a tall, rather aggressive-appearing young man and knew full well who wrote that letter. But as he read the missive, Harrison's jaw sagged. His expression was that of a young man very much bewildered. The letter wasn't marked "B." It was from Essie Garland. Essie, it was, who had introduced Jerry Malone to Bertha Haddon some three months before. Bertha's father, Raymond Haddon, a fairly well known horseman who had been in Cuba for several years, had decided to return to Louisville for a change.

Lester knew neither Jerry Malone nor Bertha Haddon. But he had been dreaming of a five-room bungalow with Essie inside, for more than three months. Now he thrust the envelope into his coat pocket, grabbed his luggage and strode away from the astonished hotel clerk. At the garage he ordered oil and gas. "Hurry," he added. "Got to make Lexington by morning—and then Louisville."

Essie's note had been brief; she had announced that their engagement was terminated, that she would give him back the diamond ring upon his return.

In New Orleans Jerry Malone sighed, glanced at Pudd Martin, already fast asleep. "Oughta run up to Louisville and bawl her out," he muttered. "Getting away with a dirty deal like that!"

Up in New Jersey Johnny Meyers, no longer the Flash, just a sullen-faced, indignant youth, tore up the pink letter very slowly. "If I didn't have this fight," he reflected, "I'd go down to Kentucky and take a hand. Darn the girls, anyway!"

Lester Harrison wasn't saying anything. He was too busy steering his flivver over the rain-washed road to Lexington.

Now the reactions of Jerry Malone and the Flash were as different as their respective selves. With his mouth set a bit more grimly Johnny Meyers went about his training during the last few days with such abandon that Tippy Young exulted. And the Flash, in eight dazzling rounds, danced, pounded his way to the lightweight championship of the world.

Jerry Malone read about Johnny Meyers's victory, but it did not inspire him to greater heights. The truth was that Jerry sulked, rode with a mechanical smoothness that netted him a few firsts, but more often seconds and thirds.

"Know what the boys are saying about you?" Pudd Martin asked one night.

"Huh! What do I care?"

"They say," Pudd went on, "that you're getting lazy. You're in the money in half your rides. An ounce more of pep and you'll head the winning list this season. You need some ambish."

"What's the use?" Jerry growled. "All I got is a reputation as a clean liver. Stanford don't like me any too well. And the same goes for my feelings. Maybe, if it was somebody else I had as a boss, it'd be different. Say, Pudd! When are you gonna get back in the training game—or buy your own ponies?"

Pudd Martin sighed. "When I make my clean-up," he answered. "I want a first-class stable. Takes the jack to make the mares, and fillies and colts, go."

WHEN the winter season closed, Stanford chose to invade Maryland. The morning after Jerry's employer had shipped the last of his string, another letter, bearing several forwarding addresses, was delivered to the jockey. It too was violet-tinted. Jerry read the brief message with bewilderment. Bertha Haddon had written a nice little note, chiding him for not keeping up his correspondence. Also Jerry was invited to drop by; he could see her at Essie's new home. The address was furnished—Mrs. Essie Harrison—on a street not far from Churchill Downs.

"Well," Pudd Martin inquired, after Jerry had shown him the letter, "whatcha gonna do? Stop by?"

"I dunno. I'm stumped, Pudd. Didn't say a word about the throw-down."

"Girls are that way," Pudd opined. "She didn't have such easy sailing. Maybe Johnny Meyers— Say! You stop off at Louisville and clear up the mystery. I'll meet you in Baltimore—next Saturday."

There wasn't any mystery for Jerry Malone to solve. Bertha was at Essie's shiny, spick and span bungalow. Plump and demure was the dark-eyed miss who greeted the rider. And Essie, after a brief greeting, retired to the kitchen.

Jerry, ill at ease, inspected the furniture.

"I—sort of like a place—one like this," he mumbled. "Bertha, why'd you write me that letter—giving me the air?"

"Giving you the air," she repeated. "I didn't write you but once. Asked you to stop by—to explain why you had clean forgotten me."

"Huh! I got two. The throw-down was a corker. Said Johnny Meyers was your sweetie. In your handwriting, too."

"I—it wasn't me," Bertha denied. "I didn't want—"

Essie, red-faced from bending over the gas stove, slid back the dining-room door suddenly. Evidently she had been listening.

"Jerry Malone," she demanded, "why didn't you do something, if you got a letter you believed Bertha wrote? Answer me that! Mighty funny you'd not write her, or come up. Here the poor thing's been crying her eyes out."

"I thought it was—the end," Jerry attempted to explain. "That maybe she'd found a better man—or something."

"Huh!" Essie sniffed. "She ought to give you your walking papers. But she won't. Remember, Jerry, Bertha's got to be at home by ten-thirty. Can't have her daddy coming after her. He'd murder you alive."

Later, Jerry, in the darkened living-room, felt the touch of Bertha's pulse-quickening lips, along with her forgiveness.

"I'm gonna save up money for a bungalow—like this," Jerry told her, thrilled and exalted. "Got five hundred now. Oughta double it by fall."

"I want a living-room suite—in velours and with cane backs—with a davenport table," she said. "And linoleum on the kitchen floor. Oh, Jerry!"

"Ten-thirty," Essie announced in crisp tones. "Take her home right now, Jerry Malone. I don't want Mr. Haddon murdering me."

JERRY hadn't answered his first letter from Baltimore before Johnny Meyers, billed as the Flash on the vaudeville circuit he was traveling, reached Louisville for a three-day engagement. It was the usual thing—a sparring partner—a short monologue by Johnny and a packed house roaring its applause. But Johnny liked it; he had a yen for the dramatic. That was why he employed a local newspaper reporter to search out Bertha Haddon and report her whereabouts. Johnny had an idea of invading the Haddon domicile in person. But that plan failed ignobly. It failed because, the second night of Johnny's appearance, he found himself gazing into the dark eyes of Raymond Haddon's daughter. She was seated in the fourth row, central section.

There wasn't much applause that night. The Flash went through his turn too mechanically. He mumbled his speech, hastened off the stage and dressed hurriedly. And before the audience had begun to depart, he was outside.

If Johnny had expected Bertha to be aloof, or give him the cold shoulder, he was in for a surprise. Accompanied by Essie, she was quite cordial.

"I just wanted to see if the conquering

hero had changed," she explained. Whereupon she introduced Essie.

"I've been trying to find you," he said. "Had a fellow combing South Louisville since last night."

Essie giggled. "That must be the young man Mr. Haddon ousted right after supper time," she reflected. "You'd better come on out to my house, Mr. Meyers. It's slightly dangerous to go philandering and mooning at Bertha's place."

JOHNNY called a taxi and took his seat between the pair, feeling a bit self-conscious. Presently he turned to Bertha. "How's your race-horse friend—Jerry Malone?"

Again Essie giggled. "He was here last week," she said. "Mr. Meyers, we're good chums, Bertha and I. Tell me why you've quit corresponding with her."

"Why!" Johnny stared at Essie. "Ask her—Bertha. Didn't she give me the haughty and cold? 'At's why I'm still in the air—afraid to talk to her—straight."

This time it was Bertha who giggled. "Come on down," she advised. "Johnny, please tell us when I gave you the haughty and cold. Certainly I didn't in Havana. I thought I was real nice to you."

"You were a queen," he asserted. " 'At's why it knocked me so cold, when you sent me that letter up in New Jersey."

"I didn't send you a letter up in New Jersey," she protested. "It was you who didn't write."

"Say," Essie interrupted. "This is where I get out. You two coming in?"

"It's late," Bertha replied. "I'll have to be home right away."

"Then you stick in the machine," Johnny decided. "We're gonna thresh this business out."

Nine dollars and fifty cents later, according to the driver's computation of time, Johnny knew what it was to tremble at the touch of Bertha's lips.

"I gotta take you home now, kid," he said. "Just as soon as this vaudeville trip's over, I'm coming back. And girlie, do you wanta live here, or New York?"

"New York," she said with alacrity. "I want to travel, to live in hotels and move around. And Johnny, next time come and see when anything happens, promise me that."

"I will," he promised.

Perhaps the meeting between Johnny Meyers and Jerry Malone never would have come, if Tippy Young, in his exalted financial estate, hadn't gone to his first love. Tippy had dropped down to Pimlico the day William Stanford ceased to be an owner. Business reverses drove Stanford out of the game and Jerry Malone out of his first contract. There was an auction sale and Tippy outbid several shrewd owners when Popinjay was put on the block. The price was twenty thousand, ten thousand secured by Johnny's signature to a ninety-day note.

Tippy meant well and, if he had been given an even break, would have taken up that note. But a strange jockey rode Popinjay in two handicaps which Tippy expected to win—and didn't. The slaughter was terrific. Johnny's manager dropped five thousand and found himself near the breaking point. He promptly took a train to Chicago and met the Flash, who was finishing his engagement in the Illinois metropolis.

"Not but one thing to do," Tippy pointed out. "You buy Popinjay. I'll save ten thousand out of it that way. Saw Pudd Martin back at Pimlico. He'll handle the colt, for the time."

"I don't know beans about racing," Johnny protested. "You just went down. That's enough for me. I'm trying to save my jack. Got a queen to spend it on. You'd better sell the pony."

"But I'm flat," Tippy protested. "Johnny, you don't wanta see your old pal go to the wall, dry-cleaned."

It wasn't Tippy's plight which turned the scales. Johnny hadn't been entirely satisfied regarding that letter mentioning Jerry Malone, which Bertha had denied writing so strenuously. The writer's identity was still a mystery. It suited his vanity to believe that Bertha had turned to him despite Jerry Malone.

"What's Popinjay worth—on the market?" the Flash inquired.

"Eighteen thousand. Can you get it tomorrow?"

"Tell you what, Tippy. I'll go in halvers. You'll have a chance to come back. And I won't be stuck so much, if you fail. Get this Pudd Martin to train. And hire good riders. If we're going to run the ponies, let's do it up right."

Tippy's battered derby went several notches farther back. Johnny's manager was happy. "Do it, old top. You bet we'll do it right. Popinjay's the best three-year-old in the country today. The best, mind you, and Stanford didn't have nerve enough to enter the colt in the three big races—Derby, Preakness or Belmont. We're gonna make up for that. We'll sew up a bunch of purses this summer. Big ones—at good odds."

"You do," Johnny promised, "and we'll build up a string. 'At's the kind of a feller I am. Go out and hire your trainer. I'll guarantee expenses till you get on your feet."

Tippy Young meant well, but he failed to get Pudd Martin lined up during the Maryland spring meeting. That failure was costly, for Tucker, the man Tippy hired, sent Popinjay to the post overfed and undertrained. The colt, with pounds too much fat which interfered with muscle action, ran as if sluggish and tired rapidly. After the third time out for the money, Tippy hunted up Pudd Martin again.

"Pudd," he begged, "please, for the love of Pete, take over my horse. Tucker's failed miserably."

"I noticed that," Pudd agreed. "Popinjay's a good one to take the boys with. Tell you what's on my mind, Mr. Young. I may go to Kentucky for the summer instead of New York. I'm kind of thinking about buying up a coupla colts, and a right nice mare down there. If I did, I'd go into the game good and proper."

"You could take Popinjay along," Tippy urged. "Makes no difference to me what track he's running on, so's he's winning. Take him along, Pudd. Johnny Meyers is in with me. He'll stand expenses."

Pudd grew interested. "The Flash? Why didn't you tell me that at first? Good kid, the Flash. Missed his scrap with Wagner. Like to talk to him sometime."

"He'll talk—plenty. I'll bring him along, the first big race. You gonna take the colt, ain'tcha?"

"Sure! Let's go over to the track. Better check up on your equipment and hands, if you've got any."

EXACTLY four weeks after the transfer of trainers, Pudd Martin sat in a Cincinnati hotel room and did some straight talking to Johnny Meyers and Tippy Young. Pudd was hot; he was minus a coat and was considering removing his shirt in the sweltering room.

"I sent for you fellers," Pudd explained, "because it's up to the owner in the long run. The Covington handicap has been raised to ten thousand dollars. Mercredi, who romped away with the Latonia Derby, is in with a hundred and sixteen pounds. Sweep All, about the best filly in the West, is in with a feather. We can put Popinjay on the track with a hundred and four. That's less than a feather."

"Enter him," Tippy interrupted excitedly. "Gosh—at that weight!"

"The colt's in condition," Pudd continued, "—lost its fat and is taking to the track in grand style. I'm not the least bit afraid of making a show. We oughta cop part of the money, if not all. Popinjay's good. And I don't say that unless it's so. We'll have a good horse for the Covington. But that ain't our main problem. We want a good rider."

"Huh!" Tippy was amused. "Ain't there a half-dozen here—good enough to turn the trick?"

"There are," Pudd admitted. "But there's not a jockey in Kentucky right now who could win the handicap on Popinjay. Mind you, I'm not saying it's impossible. But your horse was pampered and clean spoiled by Bill Stanford. He always was a funny cuss. And Popinjay can't be changed in nature all at once. Get hard-boiled with the colt and he sulks. That's what happened when Murphy tried to win that last race up at Pimlico. I saw the colt sulk. It finished back in the ruck. We don't want that to happen in the Covington."

"You're right," Johnny Meyers decided. "Who's on your mind, Mr. Martin?"

"Jerry Malone," Pudd answered. "He's up in Canada, but he'll come down for me."

Tippy Young jerked down his derby. "Oo-la-la—sweet mama! Watch out for the plaster, Pudd. Johnny's gonna hit the ceiling."

The Flash did nothing of the sort. Johnny hadn't won his championship through sheer luck; his brains had counted. "Pipe down, Tippy," he advised. "Let's get this straight, Mr. Martin. You believe our horse will cop the Covington if Jerry Malone rides—that it?"

"Yep."

"Then Jerry Malone rides—if we can get him," Johnny announced. "And don't hesitate at making the price good enough to bring him down."

Pudd Martin wired his offer immediately. It was one thousand if Popinjay won—five hundred if Jerry Malone's mount lost. Forty minutes later Jerry's acceptance arrived. Forty hours later, Jerry himself arrived. He had heard that Tippy Young had purchased Popinjay but that meant nothing to him. What had interested the rider was the fact that Pudd had offered him at least five hundred dollars. Hard as he tried, Jerry had saved only two hundred dollars since his visit to Louisville; and buying a bungalow, with fittings, seemed far in the future. Jerry, as a free agent, hadn't been so affluent. This offer of Pudd's was a lucky strike. He said as much to his former roommate.

"Huh!" Johnny's trainer grunted. "Wait till I tell you who owns Popinjay. That's what I want to know—how you'll feel about it. Johnny Meyers owns the horse."

Jerry grinned. "What does Johnny Meyers think about it?"

"He said get you," Pudd told him. "Nothing squarer than pulling the lid off the price of your ride, was there?"

"I guess not," Jerry reflected. "Wowie, what a mess! Me riding for me hated rival. Two wowies! Pudd, I'm as game as Johnny Meyers. Tell him I think he's a square-shooter."

Whereupon Jerry retired to write Bertha Haddon, in care of Mrs. Essie Harrison. And as he sealed the flap of the envelope, Johnny Meyers, three blocks away, turned to Tippy Young and asked for a two-cent stamp. It followed that Raymond Haddon's daughter received a clear-cut explanation of Popinjay's entry in the Covington.

As Jerry posted the letter he felt a bit sorry for Johnny. "He might be running over with big money," the jockey murmured, "but I got him for the count with Bertha."

Johnny didn't think about Jerry Malone; the Flash had concrete evidence that Bertha preferred him after all; and he was paying Jerry a good price for his ride. It should put him in solid with Raymond Haddon, whom Johnny had never seen, to own a champion three-year-old. All in all, Johnny was rather glad Tippy had invested in Popinjay.

THE Covington handicap was at a mile and one-eighth, for three-year-olds and upward. Mad Fancy, a sterling six-year-old, although shouldering one hundred and twenty-one pounds, was the public choice, Mercredi, the Derby victor, a close second. Jerry, waiting at jockey quarters, had been told of the early play on Mad Fancy. Moreover, Ted Gilpin, who had the mount, informed his fellow riders that the stable had planned to go the limit in backing the veteran campaigner.

"They're sort of afraid of Sweep All," Gilpin added, "and expect Tommy Blaine to bring Mercredi in the money."

"Much obliged," spoke up Blaine. "My boss is figuring on Mercredi's being at the head end of the procession. Get that, Ted?"

"Yeah. Just as well figure on Jerry Malone bringing up that sprinter beside me, as Mercredi. You're in fast company today."

Jerry grinned. "I'm going to be beside you, Ted. We got a drag at the weights and, believe me, Pudd Martin's gonna use that drag."

The other riders were skeptical. They were joking with Jerry as they filed into the paddock. Jerry caught a glimpse of Popinjay, sleek and almost black in color, then Pudd Martin. He was beside the trainer before the rider saw Johnny Meyers. It didn't matter if Jerry hadn't seen him in person before; he had been well acquainted with numerous photographic reproductions on the sporting pages.

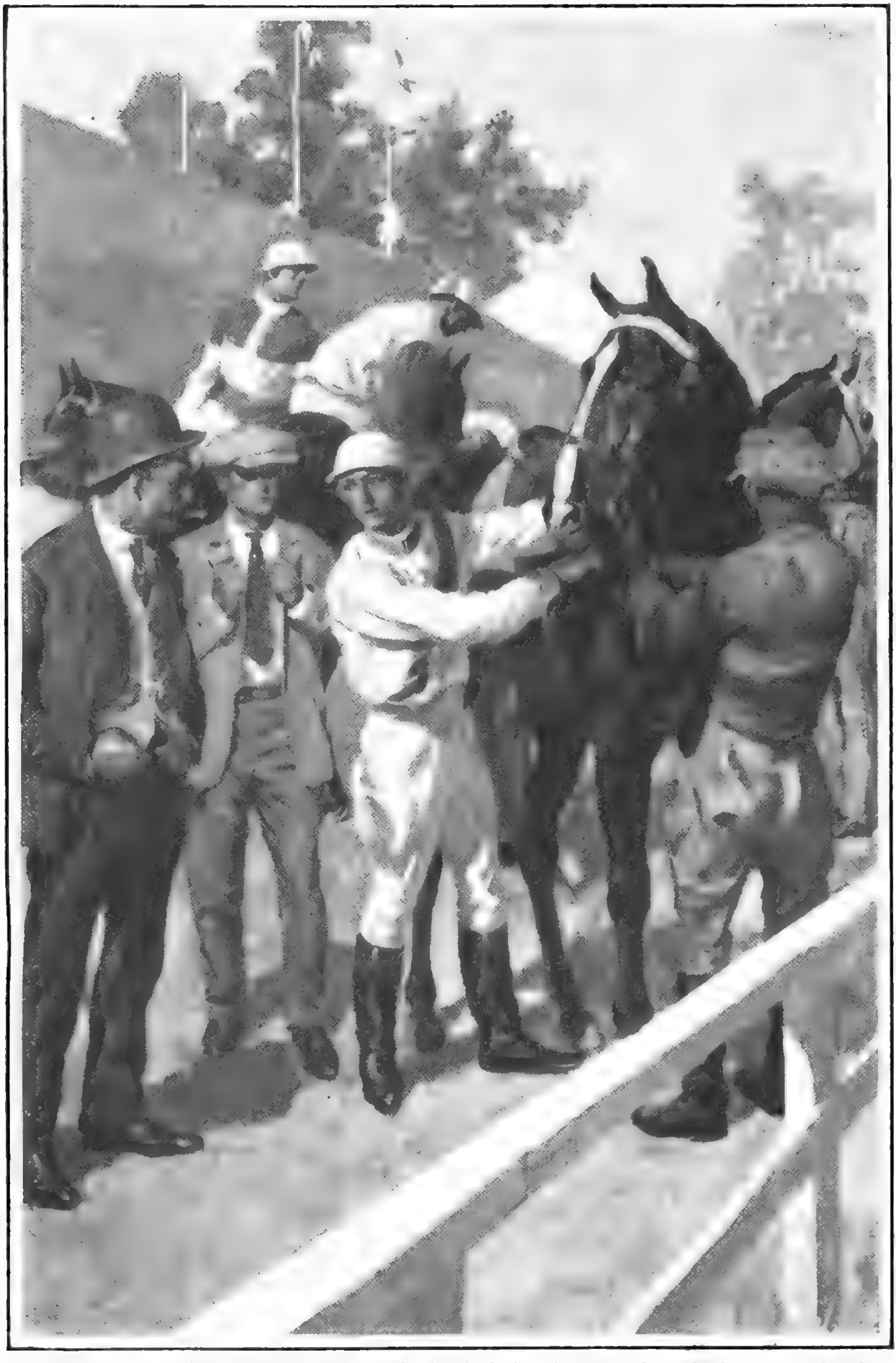
Of a size, the pair regarded each other evenly. "Johnny," Pudd said, "this is Jerry Malone."

"Pleased to meetcha," Johnny mumbled. "Pudd says you know how to handle this horse."

"Used to," Jerry replied cheerfully. "Hope I do yet. Say, Pudd! You get a ticket—straight? Want about fifty dollars worth."

"One's in your boot already," Pudd replied. "I 'tended to that a half-hour ago."

So this was the young man who had caused him great anguish a few months before. He might be the champion lightweight, but Johnny Meyers had to depend upon Jerry Malone to develop the champion of three-year-olds. Success or failure—it



Johnny Meyers might be champion lightweight, but he had to depend on Jerry Malone to develop the champion of three-year-olds. And here was Johnny, humble and agitated.

depended upon Jerry's ride. And here was the Flash, humble and a bit agitated.

"Ted Gilpin said the stable's shooting on Mad Fancy," Jerry told them. "What's the mutuel line?"

"Eight to one," Pudd answered. "For the love of Pete, Jerry, don't get to studying about them odds too much. Just think about Popinjay."

"Aw—jump in the creek! Think I'm throwing my chance away? I got a reason for needing that thousand." He said this with a significant glance at Johnny Meyers.

The champion did not appear to understand.

"There's the bugle," Jerry added. "Well, good luck, fellers. I'll be there—or thereabouts—when we turn into the stretch."

"You be there," Pudd advised. "I've had too many thereabouts."

At the barrier Jerry Malone watched Mad Fancy closely. The rider understood Ted Gilpin's tactics, how he played for a chance to beat the barrier. Sweep All delayed the start, showing a tendency to turn sidewise and lash out with both feet at Mercredi. Popinjay was on good behavior, sidling away from the restive filly, but keeping close to the webbing.

The start came quickly, just as Sweep All wheeled and came up, headed in the right direction. And it was the filly, instead of Mad Fancy, which broke out in front of the thundering field. Jerry, sensing a battle in the surge toward the rail, sent Popinjay directly ahead, down the track center. It cost him a half-length, but left his mount practically free from interference. But Johnny Meyers, who hadn't seen many races, had eyes only for Sweep All, leading her field, and Mad Fancy, a nose ahead of Mercredi.

"We're behind already," Johnny mourned. "Running fourth."

" 'At's a fine position," Tippy Young snapped. "They go a mile and eighth, you know, not a furlong."

"I know," Johnny retorted; "but the crowd yells for the one in front."

"They pay off on the one that finishes first," Pudd Martin shouted, as the stands began to roar. "Look—Mad Fancy's moving up. He's got Sweep All."

Down the back stretch Mad Fancy pulled away from the field, Mercredi coming up abreast of Sweep All. Attention of the crowd was directed at the veteran Mad Fancy. It was a mere handful, gazing through glasses, who noted that Jerry Malone had the lines wrapped—twice—about his wrists.

JERRY hadn't given Popinjay his head. His campaign was to let his mount out in the turn above the home stretch. The rider understood Popinjay perhaps better than Pudd Martin. Jerry Malone knew the colt had that rare quality every thoroughbred hopes for. Popinjay had the courage and will to come from behind. He had demonstrated that trait as a two-year-old, and Jerry believed it as potent now. He was willing for Mad Fancy and Mercredi to have their duel. Both would suffer as a result. But wait until they hit the stretch!

Ted Gilpin glanced back once, grinning at Jerry. "Yah!" he called. "Bring that sprinter beside us."

"Here I come," Jerry retorted. "Let's go, horse."

Some thoroughbreds react to the whip more quickly than others. Mercredi, under Blaine's persistent lashing, swept back into the lead at the quarter-mile marker, a great rangy colt sweeping next the rail in twenty-four-foot leaps. The alarmed cries from the stands reached Jerry as Popinjay, slow to get started, began to extend his stride.

"Pass him, horse," Jerry shrilled. "We gotta get there first. Make Johnny Meyers pay for my house and lot."

Crawling past the tiring Mercredi went Popinjay. For a stride Blaine and Jerry were boot to boot. Then Blaine drifted back, was gone. That high-pitched roar was for Mad Fancy now, for the public choice to keep ahead of this brownish black horse which gathered speed with each desperate jump. Ted Gilpin was riding with all his skill; he was using his whip, elbows, throwing his body forward. But Jerry Malone drew abreast. And Popinjay passed Mad Fancy a hundred feet from the finish posts.

"Telegram for Jerry Malone," chanted a long-faced messenger boy at jockey quarters. "Telegram for—"

"Aw—lemme have the bad news!" Jerry Malone cried, racing down the stairway. "Who in thunder—wowie!"

The message read: "Come at once. Bertha."

It was an hour until time for the Louisville train to pause at the Latonia station. When it did arrive, on time to the minute, Jerry Malone was fully dressed and had a ticket in his pocket. As he swung up the coach steps, some one bumped against the jockey, some one manifestly in a great hurry. Jerry, a bit impatient, turned to stare at the hasty one. "Well, for the love of Pete! You too!"

Jerry was speaking to Johnny Meyers, from whom he had just parted out on the track an hour before.

"Me too!" Johnny was in turn amazed. "What d'ye mean, me too?"

"I got a telegram," Jerry announced. "Urgent and very important."

"I got one too," Johnny replied, "also urgent and important."

"Mine was from a girl," the jockey persisted. "Her name's Bertha Haddon."

"Ditto," the champion lightweight replied.

They moved into the smoking compartment, sat down mechanically.

"I thought," Jerry muttered, "I had the inside track. Here's my telegram."

Johnny Meyers read it, reached into an inner pocket and tossed over a duplicate message. "Word for word," he commented.

THE train had swung around many curves down the twisting valley to the southwest before Jerry laughed abruptly. "Funny thing," he mused, "me an' you. It's a game I'm not hep to. Here I been saving up my jack for a bungalow. 'At's why I rode so hard today. She'd—well—promised to live in a bungalow."

Johnny nodded soberly. "She told me she wanted to live in hotels—and travel. And I got a ring—in my grip."

"And I believed her when she said she didn't write me 'at letter," Jerry mourned, "giving me the throw-down."

"What letter," Johnny demanded, "giving you the bounce? It was me she knocked for a goal."

"She wrote me," Jerry explained, "when I was down at New Orleans, before you knocked the belt offa Benny Wagner."

Johnny Meyers frowned. "Jerry, let's catch the next train the other way. I got a throw-down the week before I won that fight. We're being double-crossed."

"No," the jockey objected, "let's go down together, to Essie Harrison's place first. I'm from Missouri about 'at skirt. She's got to prove to me she's double-crossing."

Johnny Meyers jerked his cap down sulkily. "I'm game," he agreed. "Maybe you're right, Jerry. I'd hate to think otherwise. But it's gotta be one—or both of us—to regret this trip."

They engaged a taxi at the Louisville station and set out for Essie's bungalow. A block from their destination Johnny had an inspiration.

"I'll match you," he suggested, "to see who goes in first."

"I'm with you," Jerry agreed. "Here y'are. Huh! Didn't do it."

Johnny got out at the corner, watched the jockey alight before the Harrison residence. Lights were blazing in the living-room and several figures were visible. Jerry reached the porch. A moment later the door opened, whereupon the jockey halted in the shaft of light which revealed his bewildered expression, even to the approaching Johnny Meyers. Jerry was gazing into the faces of two Bertha Haddons.

Clad in blue, dark-eyed, dimpled, the Misses Haddon were obviously twins. Jerry stepped backward and fell off the porch, incidentally spoiling Essie's tiny flower border.

"Wowie!" the rider exclaimed. "Take a look, Johnny. Look good and hard. How many?"

"Two—jumping Christmas! It's an entry, Jerry, so help me."

Essie came out at that, followed by a jovial figure. Lester Harrison was enjoying the dramatic touch he had planned.

"Well," Essie asked, "you two intend to stare all night, or do you aim to come in?"

"Easy," her husband advised. "Let 'em get it by degrees. Boys, this is Bertha, and this is Berta. They've just put over the oldest gag in the world on you. That's the divine right of twins. And believe me, they got away with it in fine order."

It took some time, of course, to bring the pair of swains down to earth. Then some more to fix it in Johnny's mind that Berta was the one he had met in Havana, while Bertha, in Louisville, had met Jerry.

Jerry and Bertha occupied the davenport, Johnny and Berta, two chairs in close relationship. They grinned sheepishly, at the twins, at themselves and then at Essie and her amused husband. Jerry it was who became his impudent self again.

"You're right, Johnny," he announced. "We've been double-crossed. But I want to know," he demanded of Bertha, "why you did it at all."

"We saw it done in a movie, first," Bertha explained. "And then Berta read about the trick in a book. Daddy brought me back to Louisville and left sister with Aunt Marie, down in Havana. We—"

"Swapped notes," Berta interrupted. "I started it by Johnny getting my name as Bertha. Then I kept it up."

"WHEN we got together, last winter," Bertha continued, "we got to talking—about our—friends. Essie told us about Lester—how he needed prodding, or she was afraid she'd never get this bungalow. And we knew jockeys and boxers don't save much, unless there's a reason."

"So we furnished the reason," Bertha cut in. "We swapped sweethearts, long enough to scorch you up. And Essie did some writing, too."

"I'll swear to that," Lester Harrison observed. "She made me burn up an engine getting to Louisville."

"So that's that," Bertha said. "We thought it best to send for you, together, to break the news."

Essie glanced up at her husband, whispered in his ear, whereupon they went into the dining-room and closed the door.

Two hours later Johnny Meyers and Berta came inside, deserting their strategic position on the front porch. "Bertha—I mean Berta—says they'd better go home. They want to beat the old man—their father—in."

"Yes," Bertha agreed, "we'd better go. Especially since we intend to tell him—about you—in the morning. He'll kick up an awful row, but everything will be all right."

So another hour was added to the roster of time before Johnny Meyers and Jerry Malone reached a downtown hotel. The lightweight champion wanted to find a restaurant, but Jerry demurred.

"Gotta send a telegram first," he explained. "Told Pudd Martin about the wire, and where I was going. He'll be right anxious to know how it came out."

"Cripes! That was why he looked worried when I told him I was headed for Louisville."

"Then let's send him a message, with both our names," Jerry suggested.

Which they did. The cryptic wording must have been rather puzzling to the trainer. It was as follows:

Both in the money—your entry ran one-two.
JERRY AND JOHNNY.

Youth

By Faith Baldwin

YOUTH has no need of pirate ships,
Of dark and tossing spars,
No need has Youth of silvered paths
Beneath the guiding stars;
Or chanteys sung upon the watch
By men who bear salt scars.

Youth has no need of secret trails
That to the Rainbow lead,
Of Roads to Romance, white and wide,
Youth has no urgent need,
Nor of the magic lore that lurks
In some old wizard's screed.

For Youth itself is all these things,
A sailing-ship, a song,
The Rainbow at the journey's end,
Bright Romance, Youth-time long,
And all the wizards' wisdoms to
Enchanted Youth belong!

Dealing with Life in the Rough

The Sea Horses

The Subtle Menace of a Tropic Port Grows Plain, and Glanvil Battles Desperately for His Love

By Francis Brett Young

Illustrations by Joseph A. Maturo

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

CAPTAIN GLANVIL, of the *Vega*, pounded at a locked door. It was the door of Almeida, that sinister and ominous merchant of Panda, the port that for Glanvil summed up all the noisome evil of East Africa.

And trivial as he believed his need of seeing Almeida to be, by comparison with those other urgent needs of his spirit he dared not reckon, Glanvil still hammered at that locked door, long after he knew that no one meant to heed his clamor. For here in this vehement action, he could for a moment forget, or cease to think about the catastrophic experiences of the voyage from Naples. He had come ashore because the loading of his ship had ceased. Almeida, his consignee, had supplied a homeward cargo. Now abruptly, because no more orders came, the loading had stopped.

Yet, even should it go on, he could not sail.

That thought carried him into the vortex of all that he had really fled from on the *Vega*. Four soldiers guarded his engines, his ship was held. Because Laurence Salvia really meant to push his process against him? For Glanvil sheltered Salvia's abandoned English wife, who with her child had sought him, with incredible difficulty, in Panda; she had found her husband living with a native woman, and, driven away by his bestiality, had been saved from a tropical storm by Glanvil. Not at all—the ship was held because Cardozo and Bomba, the governor and the comprador, wanted the *Vega* to wait for the cargo they were bringing down to the coast!

Glanvil laughed, with an ironic bitterness—at himself, at his love for Helen Salvia, at her love for Salvia, at life!

He gave over his pounding at last. He could not make himself too ridiculous. Thoughtfully he walked away. He did not know where to turn. He could yield to Cardozo and Bomba; they would attend to Salvia. But—to do that!

Then suddenly he resolved to fight. Straight he went—to Bomba.

Bomba received him with open arms. It seemed, disconcertingly, as if he had been expected. Bomba, always smiling, produced his villainous whisky. Glanvil accepted it. He sat silent and hostile while Bomba danced about him, blinking and purring.

Suddenly he thrust his spectacled face into Glanvil's. "What did I say, captain, what did I say on the first day? By and by, I said, you'd be glad to do business with Bomba. Now you know the name of your best friend. Now you can spit on that Almeida. What did I say? As soon as I heard it I said to myself: "Now the captain will come along." And here you are, here you are! All good friends together!"

Glanvil began to wonder what the devil he was talking about; the atmosphere of alcohol in which he lived seemed to have gone to the creature's brain. He seemed surprised when Glanvil did not rise to these amicable protestations.

"Ah!" he cried, as though he had found an inspiration. "You are offended with Cardozo? Salvia's process: you blame Cardozo for that? No, no, captain. Let bygones be bygones. Cardozo has a conscience. When Cardozo is official he must do his duty. Was it Cardozo's fault that Salvia smelt money? Listen. Yesterday Salvia came here full of money that he got out of the lady. First he pay his honest debt. Give him credit, gentleman! Then he make a fantasia. Whisky, champagne—nothing too good for him. Plenty more money coming, he say. I get two thousand dollar for the bitch—"

Glanvil controlled himself with difficulty. Bomba caught his eye and scented danger.

"Two thousand dollar for the lady," he quickly corrected. "I tell you what happened. He goes with the advocate Mourao to Cardozo and makes the process. How can Cardozo refuse? Cardozo think you not do business. But that's all over; all good friends!"

He bunched up his black eyes in an ingratiating smile.

"You think, captain, that Salvia want that woman? Not Salvia! He get all the woman he want and damn cheap, too. All Salvia want is money for gin and poker. Now you tear up his process; that's all finish. Cardozo and me, we pay the advocate. You see I speak honest: that's Bomba! We put our head together, you and me and Cardozo, and we crack that Salvia like a snail. Now we shake hands and talk business?"

GLANVIL did not respond. Bomba's liquor was in his legs; he was sorry he had taken it; but his head, thank Heaven, was clear. He watched the Goanese, with mingled amazement and disgust, crawling round and round him like a cat that circles a caged canary. Were they so confident in the success of their maneuver that they believed he was ready to come to terms? Was it possible that Bomba had not heard of Cardozo's discomfiture? These questions remained unanswered, for Glanvil's mind was fermenting with a new idea.

From the mass of Bomba's incoherent chatter he had isolated one triumphant and significant fact. Absorbed in his own passion, he had imagined that the sight of Helen Salvia had awakened in her husband the desire to repossess her. And he had been mistaken. The fellow was nothing but a common blackmailer, cynical and corruptible. The possibilities revealed by this discovery thrilled and frightened him. If it were only a question of money the matter was simplicity itself. For less than five hundred pounds all his troubles could be solved without the humiliation of yielding to Bomba and Cardozo. It was an enormous sum; but he could meet it, and for the sake of Helen Salvia he was prepared to make a bigger sacrifice than that.

This sudden light on his horizon so dazzled him that, for the moment he had almost forgotten the complication of Almeida's cargo. That must be dealt with first. Beneath the turmoil of these thoughts he heard the voice of Bomba, puzzled but persuasive.

"One more peg, gentleman," he purred, "one chota peg? Pure whisky. Bomba's imported?"

With a hurried refusal he rose to his feet. Under the influence of his own excitement or that of Bomba's imported poison the room swayed about him. Bomba clutched at his elbow, as if everything depended on his power to detain him.

"Not going, captain, not going?" he cried. "You come to talk business now?"

Glanvil laughed out loud.

"Not a bit of it, my friend. You're mistaken. I'm going back to finish my talk with Almeida."

He went on laughing to himself as he saw the disappointment that contorted Bomba's face. As he stood gazing down at him he saw the features of the Goanese suffer a transformation: his blinking eyes were wide open and aghast; the color of his face changed to a dusky pallor; all horror conceivable seemed concentrated in that livid, gaping mask. The creature was sick with terror. If Glanvil had not caught him he would have fallen.

"Steady there! What the devil's the matter with you?"

"Almeida!" Bomba gasped. "You are going to see Almeida?"

"What's to prevent my seeing him?"

"You can't see him," Bomba almost screamed. "Are you mad, captain? Are you mad?"

Somewhere there was madness. Glanvil poured out half a tumbler of whisky and held it to Bomba's lips. Bomba pushed it away from him, then staggered to the table and began to chuckle hysterically.

"AH, YOU make a joke, captain," he cried. "A good joke. You go and see Almeida. Ha, ha! I understand. You want me to lend you a spade?" He stopped his chuckling suddenly; then, leaning forward, spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"Don't you know, captain, that Almeida is dead?"

"Dead! What do you mean?"

"Dead and buried. Two hour ago they break open the door. Dead many days. They bury him at once. I am undertaker, general sympathetic undertaker. I know what dead men are like. But that—"

He shuddered as he spoke. The delusion, if such it were, was strong enough to shake his whole body in memory.

"If you are not mad, I am," said Glanvil. "Almeida may be dead now, but two days ago he was alive."

Bomba wrung his hands with distress.

"No, no. He has been dead a week. They find his servant, that Zanzibari, in the house with him. He knew when Almeida died. He was afraid to tell."

"Then he lied to you," said Glanvil. "The day before yesterday I spoke with Almeida."

"Spoke with him when he was dead. I tell you there was nothing left—nothing!"

"He was alive."

"Impossible. You should have seen him. With Almeida even that was possible. Almeida was not a man. Almeida was a devil."

The thing was inconceivable, a nightmare. Glanvil spoke more to himself than to Bomba:

"But yesterday—the day before—every day, the stevedores were working on Almeida's orders. It's fantastic."

"He was a devil," Bomba repeated. "It was his spirit that ordered. A devil, a devil. You have spoken with a dead man."

"You say that he is buried?"

"It was necessary. Didn't I see him?" Bomba wailed. "Didn't I spit on the devil's grave? You not believe me? I send the boy to show you where he is buried."

Now Glanvil's mind worked quickly in spite of the horror that was in it.

"Tell me this at once," he said. "Who is in charge of Almeida's affairs?"

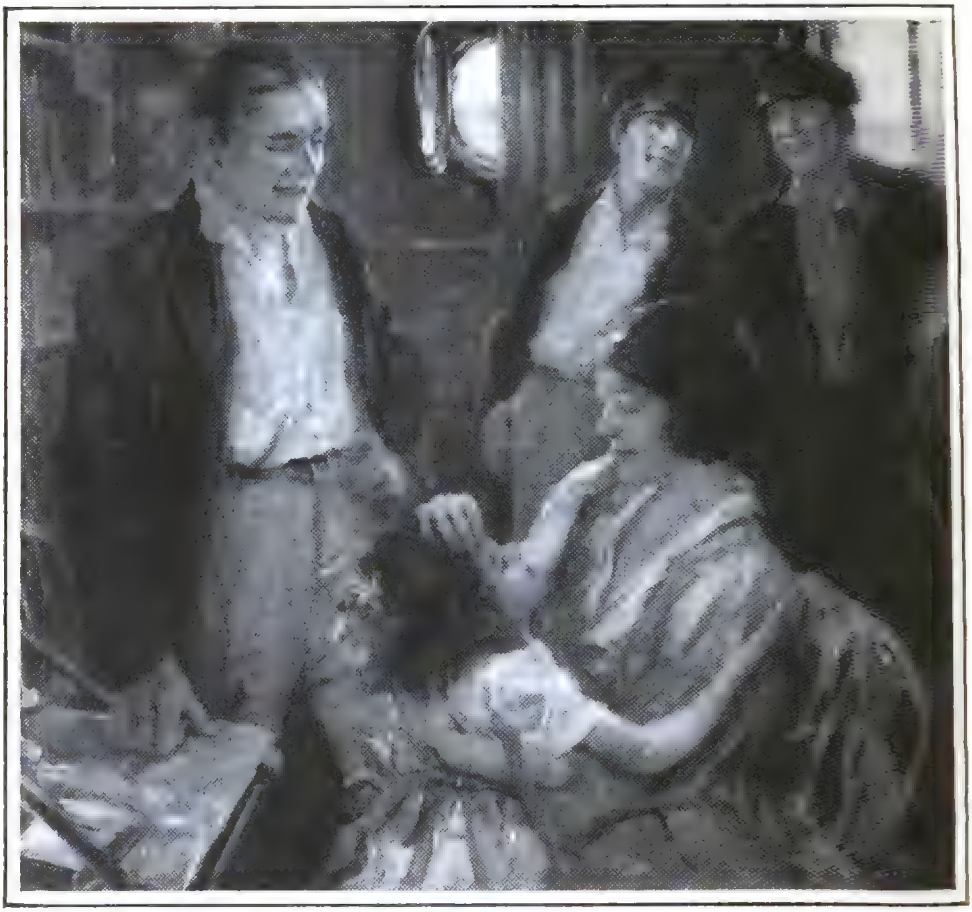
He had hoped to surprise Bomba, but the Goanese had recovered as quickly as himself.

"Why should I tell you that?" he cried excitedly. "Yes, I will tell you. There is no one. Salvia was the last. Since Salvia went nobody has seen Almeida. Who knows how long he has been dead? You think you have seen him; but who knows that you didn't talk with the devil, who knows?"

Once more Bomba collapsed in obscene and terrified laughter. In the outer chamber of the Refuge the clockwork piano burst into a tune, hideous and triumphant.

UNDER the blackness of the mango avenue Glanvil tried to collect his thoughts. It was impossible. His brain was hag-ridden by Almeida: the Almeida of their first encounter, cold and insolent; the Almeida whose icy arm he had touched in his dream; the attenuated Almeida who had struggled to express himself two days before; Almeida lying dead under his gauzy catafalque; Almeida buried, and Bomba spitting on his grave. A devil, Bomba had called him, and Bomba was right. Now it was impossible to think of him as a living man. The tall prostrate figure, the oracular lips, the honeyed voice: all these, in the light of Bomba's revelations seemed less—or more—than human.

Almeida had been dead a week, said Bomba. Glanvil was ready to believe it; to believe that this prepotent spirit, concentrated in isolation, had been able to survive, to transmit an influence hypnotic—one word was as adequate as another—that directed the minds of his servants, not only in Panda, but at a distance, long after his heart had ceased to beat. Like the tentacles of an octopus, Glanvil thought; like the tail of a snake that will go on writhing when its brain has been crushed to pulp. No wonder they hated and feared a



Glanvil's voice broke with the ecstasy of triumph. "Here she is," he said. "Take her!"

mind so monstrous! Now he was dead, not only the stricken body but the keen, malevolent spirit. On lonely inland *shambas* black men dropped their mattocks in a sudden bewilderment; on board the *Vega* the stevedores ceased work; the tentacles into which that restless energy poured had relaxed.

Glanvil could not measure the extent of the resulting chaos. Only, as far as it concerned him, he saw that it was his duty to extricate himself from the wreckage of Almeida's machine. Bomba had told him that there was nobody left to direct Almeida's affairs. With any other man than Almeida he would not have believed it. In Almeida's case it was probably true. He heard the echo of Almeida's words: "I do not delegate authority."

He began to realize that this circumstance strengthened his own position. In the holds of the *Vega* more than four hundred tons of valuable produce was already stowed. The bills of lading were in order; the cargo consigned to a firm in Liverpool whose name he knew. Who was responsible for the freightage? To whom did the cargo belong? This question, the first that his owners would ask, he could not answer; neither, Heaven be thanked, could Almeida's enemies ashore. Possession, in this case, was nine points of the law. If Cardozo and his friends disputed it, making an excuse of the unsettled condition of Almeida's affairs to detain him, he could confound them with Almeida's signature.

He rigorously shelved the temptation to follow these byways. It was his duty to concentrate on the practical aspects of the case; and these seemed plain enough. The rest of Almeida's cargo would never be loaded. It was his duty in his owners' interest, to stick to all that he held. Sooner or later the question of freightage would arise; and there, at any rate, he stood on firm ground; for the value of the cargo was sufficient to pay for its transport to the ends of the earth. It was his duty, also, to avoid further complications. As soon as he returned to the ship he would give orders to Hendry to batten down the hatches. He would make good his escape from Panda before Cardozo and his friends had time to trouble him.

He discovered that he had been reasoning like a fool. In his concentration on Almeida he had completely forgotten the guard which Cardozo had placed over the engine room, and the threat of Salvia's process. He saw that he could not raise an inch of steam until that matter was settled. Luckily, Bomba had pointed the way. At whatever cost, and at the earliest moment, Salvia must be squared.

By this time his meditations had brought him automatically to the water's edge. The night was calm, with no threat of rain.

HE SHOUTED for his boatmen. Nobody answered him. Only, out on the dark water that lay between him and the *Vega* he heard a steady splashing of oars. Another boat was approaching the shore. It came nearer, and in the starlight he saw a tall figure in white ducks standing up in the bows. His mind leaped to meet some new anxiety. He was needed on board. They had sent Harvey on shore to fetch him. He moved down to meet him.

"Hello!" he called. "Is that you, Harvey? This is Captain Glanvil. Do you want me?"

There was no answer. The rowers quickened their stroke, gathering way with which to beach their boat. She ran in softly onto the sand, and as she grounded the tall man in the bows jumped ashore, taking the landing in his stride like a hurdler, making straight for Glanvil without a word. Before Glanvil knew what was happening he was on him. His arm went up; Glanvil saw the glint of a knife and heard the ripping of his coat-shoulder as the blade went through it.

His fingers gripped the wrist of the hand that held the knife. They swayed, standing; then Glanvil's assailant overbalanced and they rolled over together on the sand, desperately grappling. The boatmen watched them with complete disinterest as they struggled, panting and snarling like two fighting dogs Suddenly the knife shot through the air and fell with a tinkle on the roadway. Out of a cloud of flying sand Glanvil emerged on top; he had mastered the other's wrists his knee pressed downward like a vise on the other's throat, and above it, a bearded face, strained backward and contorted, stared up at him with bulging eyes. He had seen that face before. He gazed at it, gasping for breath, incapable of speech. It was Salvia's.

The whole struggle had not lasted two seconds. It took Glanvil another to realize that the body that writhed helplessly beneath him was now fighting not for mastery but for life, that unless he relaxed his pressure the man would be throttled. He struggled to his feet, breathless and bewildered. Salvia's hands fell back limply on the sand. For a moment he did not move; then slowly, like a creature roused from sleep, he propped himself upon his elbow.

"Bad luck!" he gasped. "I nearly had you that time."

The words were so matter-of-fact that Glanvil heard himself laugh. The fellow knew that he was beaten. Evidently, too, he had been drinking. He sat up and tugged at his neckband, as though the pressure of Glanvil's knee still embarrassed his breath.

"Nearly settled me, too," he muttered, half humorously and with the faintest of foreign accents. "My God, yes! That was a near shave!"

IT SOUNDED as if he were talking to himself. So much detachment seemed curious in a man who had just failed in an attempt to murder. He spoke on dispassionately, in a low husky voice.

"So you're the captain, are you? I didn't get you the other night. Either I was too tight or else the shock of seeing her—" He hesitated; his eyes were set on Glanvil as if he were puzzled to account for his existence. "What I want to know is," he went on, still speaking to himself, "why the hell did I want to knife you? Eh? I've no quarrel with you. I've nothing against you. It just came over me when you said your name. Off my nut, eh?"

Glanvil edged away from him. It seemed to him that Salvia's movements were dangerous. His eyes made a swift note of the direction in which the knife had fallen. Salvia's were quick to follow him. He laughed, scornfully, as he came up within an arm's length.

"Put that in your pocket," he said, "I make you a present of it. Why should you be suspicious? And why should we quarrel, eh? About a woman? No, you're welcome to her." He seemed to be scrutinizing Glanvil's face. "How old are you? Not old enough, apparently, to have learnt that one woman's as good as another. I don't want her, I tell you. Not that much! It's finished. Only one thing I do want, and that's money. Money, to get away from Almeida and out of this inferno. Let's be friendly. Don't let us talk of women."

CALMLY he struck a match and held it in his cupped hand to light the stump of a cigar. Its yellow flame illumined his face, showing him unkempt and very pale. There was no streak of gray in his coarse black hair and beard.

"Don't let us talk of women," he repeated. "Let's get down to rock-bottom—to money. I'll tell you the truth: take it or leave it. What happened just now was an accident, a matter of impulse. You'll come with me, eh?"

Glanvil, stiffened rather than disarmed by this familiarity, consented. The time seemed propitious.

Salvia seemed delighted at his acquiescence.

"So we will make a bargain, eh? Compliments on your intelligence! It is in your interest as well as mine. Together we shall get the better of Cardozo. We can settle everything with old Mourão. We will go to his house."

Glanvil felt that he must go through with the adventure. The death of Almeida had increased the value of time. What was more, the way in which he had met Salvia, the very man whom it was his immediate duty to seek, inspired him with a fatalistic—perhaps a fantastic—belief in the wisdom of taking all risks and opportunities as they came.

Together they crossed the lighted end of the Avenida, cutting off to eastward, in the direction of the fort, along a narrow lane, unlit and sinister.

"This is the house," said Salvia at last. "If you can oblige me with a match . . ."

In Mourão Glanvil at once, perhaps illogically, felt a certain confidence. The man had dignity and, after all, he had to trust some one. He took matters into his own hands at once. Salvia was urging an action against him. He was obviously prepared to compromise. Glanvil, out of hand, offered him £200—one-tenth of the sum he had asked. And, as Salvia started up, dramatically, Glanvil produced his check book. And that settled the matter—that and a further symbol—ten pounds in English bank notes. For those and a check for £190 Glanvil bought Helen Salvia from her husband—it was so, grotesquely, that he thought of the transaction as the old Portuguese lawyer drew the absurd papers that no court would ever recognize.

No molestation, withdrawal of the process—the contract was complete!

It was worth what it had cost, though, to see Cardozo's face when he and Mourão laid Salvia's signed withdrawal of his process before him. That, at least, was valid; even Cardozo had to admit as much. And, once beaten, he was gracious. At once, he agreed, he would remove the guard.

"It displeases me," Cardozo said, as soon as they were afloat, "that you should have found yourself dragged into this vendetta. A local feud; you can have no idea of its bitterness. Now that is all over. Almeida is dead. To be associated with him meant ostracism. Now you will be welcomed everywhere, even in the most select society."

Glanvil laughed. "I am sailing tomorrow," he said.

"Tomorrow? You cannot leave us as abruptly as that," Cardozo urged. "But of course you are joking. I can help you. I can supply your cargo deficiency. The cargo about which we were talking the other day—"

"I am not interested in it," Glanvil told him.

"At least listen to me," Cardozo persuaded. "I can begin loading tomorrow. I am ready to pay you a higher rate than Almeida. I am now in a position to make up for everything that you may have lost by Almeida's collapse.

"Now that Salvia's process is done with, you can have no possible reason for fear. I make a definite offer. Within three days I promise you three hundred tons of mixed cargo. You cannot conscientiously refuse."

Cardozo had timed his proposals cleverly. Cornered in the stern of the boat Glanvil could not help listening; and, as he listened, he was forced to confess that Cardozo was talking excellent sense. The death of Almeida had left him with a bad bargain which it was his obvious duty to his owners to improve, and Cardozo pointed the way. But he kept Cardozo in suspense until they reached the gangway.

"I am ready to accept your cargo," he told him at last, "always provided that there is no delay in its delivery. You must start work at dawn tomorrow."

"Certainly," Cardozo eagerly agreed. "That is understood."

"You will pay fifteen per cent in excess of the rates current in Mozambique. The figure must be settled at once. How can you ascertain it?"

"That is simplicity itself: I will telegraph this evening as soon as I get ashore."

"You told me," Glanvil reminded him, "that the wires were down."

"That," said Cardozo, smiling and unashamed, "was an inexactitude."

Within half an hour of their arrival on board the *Vega* the Governor and his carabineers had gone.

FOR two nights and a day Helen Salvia had not stirred from the cabin that had become her refuge and her purgatory. Thanks to the slovenliness of the steward, she found her cabin exactly as she had left it, the soiled sheets on the bunk, and on the locker a heap of pitiful rubbish that she had discarded twelve hours before. Mechanically she began to divest Gina of her sodden clothes. Gina, childlike, had whimpered herself to sleep in Glanvil's arms and resented this new disturbance, but as soon as she was stripped and dried and wrapped in a sheet she curled up on the locker like a kitten and fell asleep once more.

No doubt she was too exhausted even for terror. It was better so; and yet the absorption of Gina into another world, of strange, unnatural placidity, seemed to Helen Salvia a crowning injustice. Now she was utterly alone, divorced from the sympathy of the one creature on whom she had a right to rely. Gazing, almost stupidly, at the child asleep, she became conscious of a jealousy, stronger than pity or maternal tenderness, that this creature whom she loved more passionately than anything on earth, flesh of her own body, should be dissociated from her agony.

She had always looked upon Gina as a thing peculiarly her own, incapable of a separate existence; but the eyes that had stared into hers, full of resentment, were the black eyes of Salvia, the eyes of the brown baby in the swamp, hostile and alien. She felt that she had been betrayed. She could almost have hated them. Yet she tried to sleep.

It was useless. Time after time, with the relentlessness of a gathering wave, memory rose black within her and washed her away into a terror and confusion apart from normal consciousness. It was no longer night. Instead of the dim cabin in which her body lay she saw the blinding light of early morning on the edge of Salvia's clearing; she saw the grass hut, and in its doorway the figure of Salvia seated with the naked brown baby playing at his feet. And when he saw her Salvia staggered to his feet and ran to meet them. He had no eyes for her; his eyes were fixed on Gina.

He caught the child up in his arms, hungrily, as if he would eat her; he pressed her brown face into his, babbling the baby Italian which she remembered like a dream, his hands greedily fingered her whole body, his lips were insatiable for her soft flesh. It had struck her that she should be proud of this eager possession. But she was not proud. It revolted her: it made her feel sick.

SALVIA was speaking in his admirable unnatural English. He laughed as he spoke: he still could not keep his hands off Gina's body, but his eyes were black and desperate as they met hers and made her tremble. Out in the clearing she heard the sound of the black woman's pestle steadily pounding mealies; the floor of the hut was littered with stripped cobs. He was asking her for money. She told him that she had none. It was a lie; but then she was so frightened, so revolted.

His eyes swept over her scornfully, appraising, rejecting. She could see that he had no other use for her. And her refusal unloosed a flood of foulness from his tongue. Had she learnt lying as well as prostitution? Had she come to Panda with any pretensions of innocence thinking that he was a fool? Did she expect him to believe her rather than his own sisters in Naples who had seen the whole of her degradation?

Why, her very face showed him the life she had been living; it was dissipation that had turned her old. Bestiality showed itself in her eyes, and for that, for that she had neglected this poor innocent! Not only in Naples; what about the officers of the *Vega?*

Was he to believe that sailors respected virtue? That captain? Glanvil? He had the name—no fear of that!—and would make him pay for it, too. Not that it mattered to him what she had done with herself.

At least he had got the child: his Gina, his darling, his little treasure, he declared, smothering her with maudlin kisses. As for herself he had finished with her. But since she had traded in his property he had a certain right to share in the proceeds. . . . Money. . . . Money! Her lies might do for a drunken sailor or a vain Neapolitan officer, but not for him. A woman of her kind would never spend as much as she earned. He knew her and her mean English ways!

Still she denied it. And then, suddenly dropping the child, he had sprung upon her like a beast. In a flash of dreadful remembrance she realized how she had once melted with happiness in those arms. He had no pity on her cries, paid no heed to her feeble denials. Savagely he had stripped her clothes from her and torn from the pocket in which she had sewn it her little hoard of paper money. In the midst of this degrading struggle the pounding of the pestle had ceased. Through the doorway of the hut she had seen the curious eyes of the black woman peering in at the doorway. A blow on the temple sent her spinning into a corner, where she lay feigning unconsciousness like an animal.

When she opened her eyes Salvia had gone. He had taken Gina with him. She pressed her hands to her eyes. If only she could tear this vision away from her brain!

Much later she heard his voice outside ranting at the black girl in a language that she did not understand. When he entered he took no more notice of her prostrate figure than if she had been dead. He threw himself upon the charpoy; she heard the thongs of leather creak under his weight. Then he began talking Italian, and she knew, without seeing, that he still hugged Gina in his arms. Now there was no anger in his voice. It was gentle and caressing; there were tones in it that had often thrilled her in her dreams; it seemed as though a miracle had suddenly restored him to his old self, as if all that had happened during that ghastly morning were also a dream.

He began singing in the Neapolitan dialect a song with which children are put to sleep, and when he did not sing he talked incessantly with the drawl that always came into his voice when he had been drinking. The child answered him shyly, laughing when he devoured her with his kisses; but her laughter was old and false, the laughter not of a child but of a woman who defends herself in the grip of fear.

LITTLE by little Salvia grew drowsy; he yawned, grunted, snored. Even when she knew that he was asleep she could not open her eyes, she could not move a muscle to help herself; not because the fall had bruised her limbs but because her spirit was paralyzed. She saw the opportunity of escaping present itself and could not take it. It would have been better, she thought, if he had killed her.

And then came a sweet miracle. Unwarned by any sound, she felt upon her lips the pressure of a soft kiss that stirred her more deeply than any spoken word. Gina had freed herself from Salvia's arms and crept like a mouse to her side. The cunning of this maneuver in so small a creature almost frightened her, but no other emotion could match the thankfulness she felt.

By that kiss she knew that something at least had been saved from the wreckage of her life, that though the child had submitted to Salvia's embraces she still belonged to her; and in this wild renewal of hope her soul began to live again. She gathered Gina passionately in her arms. They lay close together without need of words. Little by little the power to think returned to her: the idea of escape formed itself, then crystallized into a purpose.

She whispered in Gina's ear. The child understood. With the utmost caution she rose to her knees, then to her feet. Hugging the wall of the banda, which seemed, curiously enough, to give her a feeling of protection, they moved quietly and by slow degrees toward the open door. Salvia still slept: she did not dare to look at him. They drew near to the doorway, to the blazing white silence of the clearing. A sound startled her. Salvia had moved.

Her muscles stiffened into a catalepsy of fear; there was no more life in her than in the wooden post against which she leaned; but she knew in her heart that she had failed, that Salvia was awake. Even though her back was turned to him she felt that his eyes were on her: She waited for the new storm of violence to break. The silence dragged on intolerably, indefinitely; it seemed as if they were all suspended in a trance. And then came a thing worse than any she had feared.

In that moment of suspension she could not guess what had been passing through Salvia's fuddled mind. In the next, with a distaste more nauseating than any she had ever experienced, she knew that he was making love to her.

The sound of his words afflicted her as if they had been monstrous and blasphemous; if she had held a knife in her hand she could have stabbed him. But Salvia seemed insensitive to that or any other feeling. And what was more terrible, that access of desire worked in his face a strange rejuvenation. Beneath that bestial and degraded mask she saw the features of her lover, lips that she had once kissed with passion, eyes into which she had once gazed with the abandonment of an infinite trust.

THEN, miraculously, she was free. In Salvia's eyes there was a dazed and puzzled look as if he had never been really awake. Stupidly laughing, still muttering long-forgotten words that seemed to come mechanically to his lips, he left her and flung himself once more upon the creaking charpoy. Helen Salvia still lay petrified, numbed with defilement, against the wall of the banda. In its uttermost corner the child cowered, small, lonely, forgotten. For a long time they remained thus divided, until of a sudden she realized that Salvia had fallen into a new and deeper sleep.

Slowly she pulled her wits together. The effort was inconceivable. Cautiously she beckoned to Gina. The frightened child responded and crept to her side. Once more she approached the doorway with one eye still on Salvia. He smiled in his sleep. Evidently there was less need for caution now; the way lay open; hand in hand, they escaped. Under a thorn bush on the edge of the clearing the black woman also slept with her baby in her arms.

Of what followed she knew no more than if she had experienced it under the veil of an anesthetic. The crashing of the tornado that had spun past them, opening a way through bush that seemed impenetrable; the deluge of bursting clouds, and that dark meeting under the palm leaves which had thrilled the heart of Glanvil with tempestuous hopes; all had passed with no more impression than that of a shadow over her afflicted mind. Of the harbor passage and of her embarcation she remembered nothing. It was with wonder that, in the intervals between the waves of assaulting memory, she found herself lying in her familiar cabin on board the *Vega*. She could not even realize that she was safe.

So the first night passed. With daylight, and Ah Qui knocking at the door to bring her their morning tea, it seemed as if she had been born into a new world amazing in its order and sanity. Gina still slept heavily. The child was so exhausted that she felt it would not be fair to wake her. As yet she had found it impossible to sleep herself; but all through that day the influence of familiar sounds, the methodical staccato of the ship's bell that marked the swift passage of time, the rattle of the winches working Almeida's cargo, the whistle of Macallum in the adjoining cabin, the mechanical accuracy with which the steward delivered meals that she could not taste, contrived to restore by their regularity the rhythm of her life.

Twelve hours before, she had felt that it was broken forever; but at midday, when Rennels brought her a formal message of inquiry from Glanvil, she found herself answering him with her accustomed assurance that all went well. She was still too dazed to give a thought to the future, but the present, in its soothing monotony, seemed to insist that she had exaggerated the terror of the past. Volition she had none. Even if she had been able to summon enough determination to emerge from her cabin she could not have done so, for the clothes that she had stripped from their drenched bodies the night before were still damp and she did not feel that she had strength enough to face the eyes of any human creature.

LIKE the continuation of a dream came the next day. Even now she could not bring herself to go on deck, for the fears that she had conquered were phantom echoes of what had passed, and the menace of Salvia's return remained unabated. The little peace which she had achieved was so precarious that the very sight of Panda might destroy it. But Gina, with the resilience of childhood and that strange disquieting hardness of her own, was ready for anything.

Helen Salvia dressed her in her dry but crumpled clothes and lay on the locker, listening, while the child flirted with Harvey on the deck outside her window. She listened and wondered, for it seemed to her unnatural that so delicate a creature as Gina should have been able to recover so quickly. It disquieted her to feel that Gina was so unlike herself, that there was something old and hard and inhuman in her that was alien to her own nature; and yet she was glad of it, too, for it would have been terrible if the horrors which they had endured had left an indelible mark on such a young and plastic life.

Presently she became aware of a change in her surroundings. It was the time at which Almeida's stevedores had stopped work. The sudden silence disquieted her. She wondered what had happened. It continued; not a winch moved. This could mean only one thing: that the loading was finished and that before long the *Vega* would leave Panda.

Realizing that, she was moved to a madness of new hope. The thought of escape intoxicated her. If she had been dressed, or if her rain-crumpled clothes had been fit to wear, she would have run out on deck to see for herself. She would have called to Gina; but the child's voice could no longer be heard, so she settled down in a state of agonized expectation, waiting for news. It came, an hour later, when Ah Qui, accompanied by Gina, flushed and cross with tiredness, brought in the dinner. She asked him if the ship was sailing, but the Chinaman only shook his head. He could tell her nothing but that the work on the cargo had stopped suddenly and that the captain had hurried ashore.

And now the silence of the ship seemed to her deadly and sinister. Strangely perturbed, she put the tired child to bed and sat on, waiting, with open eyes, lost to all sense of time.

She heard a knock on the bulkhead beside her door and jumped to her feet. It was Glanvil. Before he spoke her name she knew it was he, and hurriedly bade him enter. He came into the cabin, filling its narrow compass. It seemed to her that she had never seen him so near; she had never been so conscious before of his physical immanence; he towered above her; the toplight of the cabin, illuminating his face from a new angle, showed it to her haggard, furrowed, and so old that she was sorry for him. It was the face of a man who had just emerged from an ordeal; she could see that he had suffered, and her conscience told her that it was in her behalf, so that she grew humble and anxious to please.

"First of all," he said, "I want to know how you are. Since I left you a number of complications have arisen. I've had my work cut out to deal with them. In any case I thought you would be happier left to yourself, as you suggested."

"As I suggested," she repeated in bewilderment.

He only answered her with a strange smile. She could not understand what he was driving at.

"I don't understand you," she said, but he would not help her to do so.

"That's a small matter," he replied. "We'll speak no more about it. I'm thankful to see that you're—no worse. Things have turned out better, on the whole, than might have been expected."

"To put it shortly," he went on, when she was silent, "your husband gave us trouble. He took out a summons against me, a civil process, which had the effect of keeping the ship in Panda until it was settled. It implied that I had enticed you away from him. It suggested—well, you can imagine what it suggested."

"Yes, I can imagine," she said quietly. Then, suddenly, her stony face flushed and she clasped her hands. She spoke rapidly. "You need not tell me any more. I'm only thankful that you've been honest with me. I might have known that you would be. Words are no good: I can't tell you the very least of what I feel—I mean your chivalry, your kindness, your gentleness, generosity—" She put out her hand impulsively. "Will you take all that as said? You know that I can't thank you or repay you in any way—"

He had taken her cold hand in his. Incongruous tears came into his eyes. "There's no question of that, no question," he said. "I don't ask for thanks or repayment."

"That is the worst of it," she answered quickly. "But the score isn't finished yet. There's one last thing that I want you to do for me. I want you to promise me, before I ask it, that you'll do it. It isn't a big thing. It's quite easy. Promise me—promise!" She clasped his hand more urgently.

"First let me finish telling you what happened."

"No, no, I don't want to hear any more. Besides, even if you won't promise, I can find some other way. The last thing: you can't refuse me." Her voice was like that of a pleading child, and when he tried to speak again she overran him, insisting on being heard. "I can be ready in five minutes," she said, "and all I want is a boat to take me ashore."

"NO, NO, you don't understand," he said rapidly. "I've told you already that it's all over. If only you'll listen to me—"

It seemed as if she couldn't take it in, as if his words had passed through her brain without meaning, leaving her only the echo of the last.

"I won't listen to you," she persisted. "You've done too much for me already. I refuse to be beholden to you any more. Please let me go!"

"I tell you that it's all over. You've nothing to fear. The action is withdrawn."

"Withdrawn?" she murmured. "What do you mean?"

Deliberately he handed her the document which Salvia had signed in Mourão's office. She glanced at it as though it were something irrelevant, then, suddenly waking, began to read. He watched her with a clamorous excitement in his heart. His heart cried: "Look, it is I who have saved you: I have done it because I love you. It is nothing: if you were to ask me for my life you could have taken it!" But his lips were dumb, his face was white and cold.

She read the paper through to the end. Then the hand that held it dropped to her side and she stood staring at nothing. At last she spoke slowly, clearly, coldly.

"I see," she said. "Yes, I see. A financial transaction. Two hundred pounds. You have bought me like an animal at the market. I'm your property. Is that it?" She laughed in a harsh voice that he did not recognize. "Do you really think I'm worth that? Two hundred pounds? What do you propose to do with me?"

He rose to his feet, blanched, shaken by her wicked injustice.

"For God's sake don't talk like that!" he whispered. "You are your own mistress, and you know it. You have no right to misunderstand me so wilfully."

She stared at him with queer unseeing eyes. Her eyes frightened him; they were not sane. Somehow or other he must bring her to herself.

"Can't you realize?" he stammered. "This means that you are free."

She answered him with a look of wild comprehension.

"Free? Yes, is that what you say? In that case I am at liberty to go ashore?"

Now their eyes met fully. His blazed with a sudden anger that melted away into compassion as he spoke; but even this change could not conceal his bitterness.

"Yes, you're at liberty to go ashore. You're at liberty to commit any madness that comes into your head. Go, by all means! You can go ashore in five minutes if you like. But understand this: you won't go alone. You're not fit to go alone. If you go ashore I shall go with you. Not from any right that this miserable document gives me, but because—"

The words "I love you" struggled on his tongue; but they were never spoken. Suddenly, with a cry that seemed to come not from any human voice, she had thrown herself at his feet in an abasement that made him dumb; clutching his hand as though the stability of her reason depended on it.

Her words came to him torn and mutilated by the violence of their emotion.

"Forgive me," she cried. "Forgive—for God's sake forgive me! Of course I am mad—mad and wicked. But you know—you know. It's been too much for me. And I'm not fit to touch you. Not fit to touch your hand. You're too good to me, too generous, too splendid. I couldn't believe it. I'm not fit to live, but there's enough left in me to realize that. And if only you can forgive me—"

She stopped abruptly, then spoke again in a voice that had become more devastating in its broken humanity.

"You see I have faith in nothing—in nothing—"

The word faded away as though, in the last syllable, it had no longer any connection with the mind that had shaped it. She was alert, listening. By some perception finer than Glanvil's she had realized that the sound of her outburst had awakened the child. With a quick, tigerish movement she had turned and left him. He saw her, as in a miraculous transformation, crouched at the other end of the locker with Gina, crying and frightened, in her arms. The life had come back into her face; it was flushed as the face of the child to which it was pressed. Their tears mingled as her voice grew soft in endearments. "Gina, my lovely, my precious, my own sweet darling! Were you frightened? No, there was nothing to be afraid of. It's mother, my sweet one; it's only mother."

Glanvil, watching them together, knew that this was a world into which he could not enter. Silently, with a bursting heart, he turned and left the mother and child together. In spite of his failure to express himself the encounter had filled him with a curious elation. As he walked to and fro upon the lonely bridge the world seemed scarcely wide enough to contain it. His spirit expanded among the stars.

THE *Vega's* luck had turned. Cardozo, to Glanvil's cynical surprise, was as good as his word. At dawn the dhows returned with consignments of cargo suspiciously resembling the remnants of Almeida's. Cardozo himself appeared with sheaves of doubtful documents, hurriedly prepared. He spent the morning closeted with Hendry, explaining marks and quantities with which he was evidently unfamiliar. The whole business smelled of improvisation, its slovenliness drove the chief officer to distraction; but Glanvil grimly reflected it was not his business to discriminate between the various and infamous degrees of Panda's business morality. His only responsibility was to his owners, and they, at least, should be satisfied with the turn that things had taken.

All through the day the elation with which he had left Helen Salvia on the night before sustained him. Why, he could not say. And yet this was certain: that where before, he had labored beneath a crushing weight of apprehensiveness and uncertainty, he now felt sure of himself and had no fear of anything that might happen. He felt that he had the whip hand of Panda and all its villainies; once more he was the master of himself and of his ship.

It was with all his old confidence that he listened at lunch to Hendry's grievances. So far Hendry had had a soft time in Panda; it would do him all the good in the world to swallow a little of the medicine his captain had taken. Cheadle also could do with a dose. He administered it, mildly, in a demand for information as to the quantity of coal in hand, and an order that everything must be ready for sailing at short notice.

"Another bout of coal fever," Cheadle groaned as he pulled on his boiler suit to measure the bunkers.

Another circumstance angered Glanvil while it cheered him. Early in the afternoon a messenger arrived with a cable from Liverpool, in answer to the one that he had dispatched on the morning he reached Panda, instructing him to proceed to Durban for mealies if any cargo space remained after his shipments at Panda. As he decoded it he realized that it had freed his hands. If Cardozo had been as smart as he wished to be he would have suppressed it. Certainly he had done his best; for when Glanvil came to examine the acknowledged date of arrival he saw that it had been lying in the Panda post office for two days. Evidently the code had baffled Cardozo; but that was no reason why the villain should not be told of the discovery. He sent for him. Immediately Cardozo appeared in a frenzy of friendliness.

"I think you had better wake up your

postal authorities," Glanvil told him. "I see that this cable has been delayed."

"I am not the post office," Cardozo assured him; "but I will certainly investigate. You forget, however," he added gently, "that the wires were swept away by the storm."

"That, we decided, was an inexactitude. In any case they have been silly enough to write their own condemnation. You can see the date for yourself." He handed the cable form to Cardozo.

"But this," said the Governor in an aggrieved voice, "is in code. I find that interesting. Such things have always fascinated me, as an amateur. If you will be kind enough to explain?"

Glanvil laughed to himself. The rogue was not subtle. For a moment he hesitated. It might stimulate Cardozo to greater effort to know that the *Vega* was now independent of his cargo. A concealed weapon, on the other hand, might be more useful in an emergency. He stifled his instinctive frankness and took back the cablegram without a word.

"The cargo goes well?" he asked.

"Well enough." His organization, Cardozo confessed, was in some ways inferior to Almeida's. "But by the end of the day we shall see."

THAT evening a chastened and exhausted Hendry presented his report. The work had been as slipshod as Almeida's had been precise. "They're enough to turn a man gray, sir," Hendry confided.

Then Cheadle came in gloomily, his cap on the back of his head.

"Here's that chit about the bunkers, sir," he said in an aggrieved voice. "As I anticipated, we're well in hand."

"Very good, chief. You understand that I may want steam at short notice?"

"I do, sir," Cheadle answered grudgingly. "Of course that isn't what the office 'ld call economy, but if you give the order—"

"Exactly, Mr. Cheadle. The order has been given."

The cargo moved aboard slowly, and in a hopeless confusion. Glanvil threatened Cardozo; got promises, some amendment. After dinner he retired to his cabin. In the stress of the last week he had neglected everything. Apart from the answered cable he had made no attempt to communicate with his owners; he had not even replied to the letters from home that had reached him on the afternoon of his departure from Naples. Now, in the renewal of strength and confidence he stripped to a singlet and set himself to deal with the accumulated litter on his desk. The heat frustrated his will. He saw, in a moment, that the task must be abandoned. He sat on at his desk, too lazy to move, staring at the African Pilot which still lay open at the page defining the dangers of the approach to Panda and the deadly Cavallos Marinhos shoal.

"Cavallos Marinhos," he thought. "That must mean Sea-Horses. My Portuguese is improving." And then he began to think of the fantastic names that had been given to other dangerous reefs, and particularly of one that flung its spray into the air westward of Berry Head. The Dancing Beggars, that was called. The Dancing Beggars. Between them and the Sea Horses of Panda the contour of the globe bulged boldly into space.

Against the dark magnitude of that monstrous curve his imagination set the infinitesimal *Vega* with himself and his crew crawling like microbes aboard her. How small they seemed, how insignificant all the passions that possessed them, their puny schemes, their appetites, their hopes . . . Helen Salvia—

A knock startled him. Before he had time to answer it Mrs. Salvia was at his side, wild-eyed and as potent as a tornado.

"Gina!" she cried. "She's missing. We can't find her. What can I do?"

Her urgency flustered him. It was so rapid that he could not respond to it at once.

"Try to calm yourself for a moment," he begged her as he collected his thoughts.

"I can't. I can't. We must do something—at once!"

"Probably she's in the poop with Lamps. We'll go and see. Come along."

"No. She's not there. I've been all over the ship."

"When did you miss her?"

"I don't know. Yes, I do. Ten minutes ago. But that's not the point."

"When did you see her last?"

"I didn't see her. Mr. Cochran says she was playing with the goose. That was an hour ago. I've called her everywhere. She's gone. For God's sake do something!"

He tried to soothe her.

"You mustn't break down like this. That won't mend matters. Probably she's playing a trick on you: she's hiding somewhere."

"Gina never does that. She's gone. They've taken her away. Laurence! I knew we hadn't finished with him."

"That's nonsense. You can put that out of your head. Salvia is squared. It'll take him a few days to drink ten pounds."

"No. You don't know him. If you had only seen him! He was mad about Gina: just as if he could eat her. Besides, it's no good arguing, I know. I know! And that paper—I've just remembered. It spoke only of me: it said nothing about her. That's Laurence all over. You're simple compared with him. I'm sure he had it in his mind when he signed it. If he's taken Gina ashore I must go ashore, too. I can't stay here a moment without her. Please order Mr. Hendry to give me a boat. Oh, my God, can't you understand?"

Glanvil understood. What was more, he believed in the rightness of her instinct.

"I want you to promise me one thing," he said. "And that is that you'll stay here quietly and do nothing without my permission. Probably you're right. Even if you are it doesn't make much difference. You must trust me to deal with this. If Salvia has taken her, I promise you that I will get her back again. Only you must stay here quietly. Otherwise I can do nothing. Will you promise me that, now? Will you trust me?"

"Yes, I'll trust you," she said with a strange quietness.

"Then show that you trust me by putting your feet up and staying here quietly. Promise me, absolutely, that you will not try to do anything on your own."

"I promise. How good you are to me!"

As Glanvil pulled on his coat he heard her sobbing quietly behind him. He could not trust himself to look at her again before he left the cabin.

EMERGING on deck, he ran straight into Harvey.

"No luck, Harvey?" he asked, taking his errand for granted.

"No luck, sir. The bo's'n and I have been all over the ship. Macallum has searched his side, too, but I don't think there's any likelihood of her having gone down to the engines: they're the one thing she's frightened of. The kid has her own little ways and sticks to them, and I know pretty well where to look for her. She's not on board, sir, and I don't believe she's fallen overboard either; she's like a monkey when it comes to climbing. I think Mrs. Salvia's right, sir. It's her husband."

"The Second saw her last?"

"Yes, sir." The voice was Cochran's. "I saw her for'ard, on the well-deck, playing with that old goose. Number One swears she was there an hour ago; so does the rice-cook."

"An hour ago. It was light then. Were any of the stevedores still aboard?"

"Must have been. There are always a few stragglers fooling with the Chinks. Then there's the old Arab that sells fruit. He must have been there."

"Hendry's sure to know that. Where the devil is he?"

"Here, sir," Hendry breathed in his ear. "When we went in to dinner the deck was empty. I wouldn't have had this happen for worlds. Poor thing! The mother, I mean. She's gone, right enough, and Heaven only knows where she's got to, by now."

The four men stood in silence. Common anxiety had obliterated for a moment all their differences of rank and temperament. At last Glanvil spoke.

"Are there any shore boats alongside, Hendry?"

Hendry hurried to the berthing-rails.

"Two, sir," he reported. "The dinghy that used to be Almeida's and another."

"Then turn the niggers out of both of them. Quietly. As little noise as possible and no nonsense. Let the bo's'n and the quartermasters see to it. Fetch them on board and stow them aft in the sick bay for the time being."

"Very good, sir."

"You, Harvey, tell the chief that I want him immediately. Cochran, stand by a minute. I shall want you."

Without effort a plan of action had defined itself in Glanvil's mind. He was impatient to begin. He could have lost his temper when he saw the figure of Cheadle slowly lurching along the deck in his direction, under Harvey's escort.

"Mr. Cheadle, kindly get up steam immediately. We shall clear in two hours' time."

The very silence of the place made it more menacing. "I'll go by myself first," Glanvil whispered. "You two fellows follow."

"In two hours, sir?" Cheadle gasped. "That's hardly possible."

"It must be done. I don't care how you do it. Turn out both watches. I won't take any excuses. I gave you the order this morning to be prepared."

From the gangway beneath them, where the bo's'n and his men were performing Hendry's orders came the stifled sound of a struggle. Cochran gave a chuckle of satisfaction. The resentment in Cheadle's eyes gave place to sudden alarm. Two quartermasters struggled up the gangway with a native bound and gagged between them.

"I don't like this, sir," Cheadle whined. "As chief engineer of this ship—"

"That's enough, Mr. Cheadle. If you dispute my orders I shan't hesitate to arrest you. You'd better go at once."

Cheadle went.

"Now, Harvey," Glanvil went on quickly, "I'm going on shore to look for this child. I think I know where to find her. I want you and Cochran to go with me. It'll be a tough job and if either of you dislike it I'll ask for other volunteers; but I know there's no need for that. If you have revolvers you'd better take them. I've lost my own."

"I'm in it, sir, like a shot," said Harvey, and Cochran grinned an eager assent.

"Two minutes, then."

They left him. The prospect of immediate action was stimulating to Glanvil. It was as though the strings of his existence had been tautened, attuned, to a higher key. Now they vibrated with the true and splendid clearness of an instrument perfected for the expression of his will. For a moment his thoughts fled backward to the figure, shattered and pathetic, which he had left huddled on the locker in his cabin; but he knew that in this moment such reflections were dangerous to an enterprise whose success depended upon a ruthless concentration. Only for one second did he allow himself to halt outside the porthole in the for'ard bulkhead and listen. From the lighted cabin issued no sound, and he was thankful for this. Two figures approached him quietly.

"Ready, sir," Harvey whispered.

GLANVIL made his plans swiftly as they pulled shoreward. This might be Salvia's own show; it was more likely that once again Cardozo and Bomba had put him up to a trick bound to hold the *Vega* in port. If that were so, even if he found Gina, as he fully expected he would, in Salvia's hut, escape with her through Panda would be difficult. Cardozo held the high hand ashore.

Even to approach the hut by his old way, through Panda, was dangerous. But he could skirt the shore, working up the river to the swamp, land there, and so reach Salvia's hut from behind. It would be hard; he would have to guess his bearings. But it was the best way.

The enterprise turned out to be more than hard; to be almost impossible. The delta was like a watery labyrinth, full of blind alleyways and useless creeks; often even the light boat was aground in mud, and finally they had to abandon the boat. But that now seemed to be the obvious thing to do.

"We can't find our way back—that's sure," said Cochran. "But if we go back through Panda now they won't be looking for us—as they would have been if we'd come that way."

So they made their way, hoping their calculations were right, through swamp and jungle and morass. They were torn by thorns, impeded by mud and rank growths.

At the end of an hour that seemed like ten the character of the vegetation suddenly changed. Glanvil's outstretched hands, that by this time had acquired the sensitiveness of an insect's antennæ, came in contact not with thorned branches but with the erect and fleshy leaves of a plantation of bananas.

His heart choked with wild hopes. "We've done it," he called back as he felt his way between the smooth stems.

To this plantation succeeded another of mealies that had shot upward like elephant-grass in their desire for sun. On the edge of these he halted to get his breath and gather strength for the moment that was coming. The others came up behind him. He could hear Cochran's labored breathing above the shrilling of frogs which had been so constant that, until that moment, he had not noticed it.

"If you'll wait here a second, I'll have a look," Glanvil told them.

He stole forward, rustling the dry mealie stalks like a breeze. He found himself on the edge of a clearing; but the clearing was not Salvia's. In the middle of it, huddled together like huge cattle asleep, was a circle of grass huts. It was a native village. Even in the midst of his disappointment, there was relief. The nearness of any kind of humanity was cheering after that wilderness of hostile trees. The snarling and howling of dogs greeted his presence. He went straight up to the largest hut and called loudly. He grew conscious of an attentive silence within. Then, with a startling suddenness, the skin curtain was thrust aside from the door and the naked shadow of a young man appeared, preceded by the blade of a long fighting-spear.

Glanvil began to curse his lack of language and the futility of gesture.

"Salvia," he repeated again and again. "I want to find Salvia!"

The black man stared back at him without comprehension.

He heard Harvey's voice.

"Let me see if I can manage it, sir. I know a word or two of Swahili."

HE BEGAN to talk, slowly, clumsily. The black man understood. He dropped his war spear and emerged into the clearing carrying another, a light-hafted weapon of the kind that is used for throwing at birds. He pointed, and they followed in single file. He laughed and spoke to Harvey in a dialect that was beyond him.

And now the way seemed easy, its surface trampled smooth by naked feet. It twisted cunningly through the shadows of a drier bush; it went like a snake, along the way of least resistance, but with an unchanging purpose. The native walked so quickly that their limbs could not keep pace with his. Time after time he halted and stood, like a statue of ebony, waiting for them. It began to seem as if they would go on like this forever when the native suddenly stopped, and as Glanvil came up with him he saw that they had come at last to the round clearing that he knew so well. In his mud-sodden pocket he found a handful of rupees which he thrust into the native's fingers. The man raised his hand to his forehead in a solemn salute and left them. Harvey and Cochran came up behind him.

"This is the place," he told them.

The solitary *banda* slept as soundly as the native village. By a merciful Providence no dog was aroused by their presence, and yet the very silence of the place made it more menacing.

"I'll go by myself first," Glanvil whispered. "You two fellows follow me as quietly as you can and have your revolvers ready."

He crept forward to the opening of the hut. He peered into its darkness. His eyes, by this time endowed with the sense of a nocturnal animal, distinguished the form of Salvia stretched on his side upon the thonged charpoy. On the ground beside it the black woman slept face-downward, her child bundled against her breast. Salvia choked and started in his sleep. It was almost as if some watchful intelligence warned him of Glanvil's presence. Then he lurched over onto his back and began to snore.

Glanvil drew his breath. In all that darkness there was no sign of Gina. A medley of new projects whirled into his mind. If the child were not there all his efforts had been wasted. But Salvia, for certain, could tell him where she was. He decided to call the others; to wake up Salvia at the point of the revolver and force him to show them where she was secreted. That should be easy enough, for the firearms would frighten the black woman out of attempting to give the alarm. Any violence would pass unnoticed in that solitude.

He began to retrace his steps cautiously and, as he did so, was almost startled into a cry. Something soft and cold had touched his hand: a cowed and friendly dog; a night-adder writhing in the grass wall. . . .

He snatched his hand away, and then, in an instant, realized that it was Gina who had crept to his side out of the inmost darkness of the hut. In obedience to a sudden impulse he picked the child up in his arms and kissed her.

"Don't speak," he whispered. "Not a sound! Go quickly to Mr. Harvey outside. There's a good girl."

Quietly she slid away from him. It seemed as if this slender creature had been born with an instinct for such desperate adventure. He turned and spoke in a low voice to Harvey.

"Get away quickly, you two. Carry her along the path. It opens over in that corner. Don't wait for anything. I'll follow you."

He turned to do so. Harvey and Cochran had started already; but as he dashed off diagonally to follow them, excitement made him careless. A taut strand of wire caught at his shaky legs and flung him to the ground. All the impetus of his strength was on this headlong fall; his forehead, like a flying ram, collided with the burnt stump of a tree. For a moment he lost consciousness. A second later Cochran was at his side and bending over him; Cochran was shouting in his ear:

"Get away quickly, sir, if you can. I'll deal with him."

He could not imagine what it was all about.

"Get away!" Cochran repeated.

GLANVIL had a momentary vision of Salvia standing in the doorway with a rifle in his hands. He tried to scramble to his feet. Something had gone wrong with his left knee. To move it was agony. Once before the same thing had happened. He remembered it in a flash: a football field; Brixham; fifteen years ago. Dimly understanding, he obeyed. He began to limp away across the clearing, sick with pain. The flash of the rifle and a simultaneous report smote his dazed nerves with a shattering impact. He heard the crack of Cochran's revolver and Salvia screaming unintelligible foreign words. Mad with pain and anxiety to stand by Cochran, he pulled up. Another bullet snapped like a whip-lash in the air. Cochran, his head lowered like that of a charging bull, hurtled by him and fell to the ground.

"Blast him!" he cried. "Can't you move, sir? For God's sake take cover, then! Get out of range while I keep him quiet with the Mauser."

He heard the words but could not take them in. When he raised his head to answer, the darkness spun away from him. A red-hot needle pierced his knee. Rough on Cochran, he thought. Another shot from Salvia spattered them with earth. Cochran's pistol replied. He laughed as he fired.

"Like old times, sir. I remember being potted by a submarine off Ushant when I was in the Q boats. I can't see the blighter," he went on hoarsely; "but I guess he can't see us either. Aim at the flash: that's the ticket. If you're damaged, sir, you'd best get into the wood while I keep him busy."

"It's my knee," Glanvil muttered. "Gives me hell to move."

"Slipped cartilage, ten to one," said Cochran. "Lie down flat and let me give the foot a pull. How's that?"

It was better. It seemed as though by this simple procedure some of the agonizing tension had been relieved. He pulled himself again into a kneeling posture.

"Now don't go waiting for me, sir. No rot of that kind," Cochran continued. "You get right off and I'll fetch up somehow. So long and good luck!"

There were no words to be said. He was crippled, unarmed and therefore useless. Painfully Glanvil crawled toward the edge of the clearing. The ache in his knee abated. He pulled himself upright, clutching at the trunk of a tree. With dread of the old agony's renewal, he forced himself to flex and straighten the knee. There was no pain in it; only a numbness and a feeling of protest and apprehensiveness.

He set off slowly, limping along the well-remembered track. Behind him he heard the blind duel proceeding. Shot after shot. The answering fire of Cochran's pistol seemed like the spitting of a child's toy against the reports of Salvia's rifle. And all the time that he limped onward his dazed mind was fighting against the impulse to return and face the danger at Cochran's side. He knew that he could give no help; but that would not have restrained him had he not realized that Harvey might easily lose the track. In any case it was his duty to wait for Cochran. He halted, bewildered, as the steady firing went on.

There came a sudden silence. The duel had ceased. How had it ended? Now, more than ever, his duty to Cochran called him. In that sinister cessation he imagined Cochran lying with a bullet through his lungs. The bush shuddered as if in horror at what had happened. It meant nothing; only that the wind was rising, but he could bear it no longer. He hurried back along the path as fast as his leg would allow him. He heard steps approaching rapidly.

"SALVIA!" he thought, and pulled himself together for a final struggle. The approaching figure became aware of him and stopped. "Who is it?" Glanvil cried.

"Is that you, sir?" Cochran's voice answered him. "By God, I thought you were a lion. I nearly gave it you."

"Salvia?" Glanvil gasped.

"I got him—had to kill him or let him kill me. How's the knee, sir?"

"Pretty well, thanks. It's the head that's missing. A bit giddy."

"Come on, then. Let's give you a hand."

Honestly, he was glad of it. He took hold of Cochran's arm. The jacket sleeve was drenched with warm sweat.

"Steady, sir. A bit lower down. That gives me jip."

The dampness was not of sweat but of blood.

"You're hit?" Glanvil asked quickly.

"Nothing to shout about," Cochran assured him. "I think the blighter's taken a chunk out of my shoulder."

Now the wind was really rising. Around them all the dry bush had begun to roar. As they stumbled onward, his body half propelled by Cochran's strength, its tumult seemed to get into Glanvil's brain. Something in this adventure was familiar; he couldn't remember what until, of a sudden, he became aware of the leaning baobab which he had made a landmark on the night of the other storm. In the advent of this demon of wind it seemed to him as if history were repeating itself. Then, as before, a flash of lightning illuminated everything in a white unreal splendor. Full in its track he saw the figure of Harvey, unnaturally tall, hurrying away from them with Gina in his arms.

"There he is, sir!"

Cochran hallooed like a boy. In another moment they were together.

Now it seemed to Glanvil as if nothing mattered. The numbness with which the concussion had affected his brain gave way to a curious exultation. Though his feet felt as if they did not belong to him his head was preternaturally clear, so full of power and cunning that he seemed to himself possessed.

The same infection seized them all at the same moment. Cochran and Harvey began to chaff one another like schoolboys returning from a picnic. It seemed incredible that one of them had been stunned, that another was still bleeding from a bullet wound, and that the third, after enormous exertions, was carrying the weight of a child half dead with fear. They tramped on, elated with triumph. The wind, which had now risen to a gale, roared about their heads. Then came the rain, full of wild, blinding violence. Beneath its uproar no voices could be heard.

"Bear to the left here," Glanvil shouted. "We must avoid the town. Cardozo may have set a guard."

"No fear of soldiers, sir," Cochran bawled back. "The Portuguese don't like water!"

In a space of time that seemed to Glanvil short beyond all his reckonings, they had scrambled onto the road that skirted the sea. Dazed with exhaustion and thankfulness, he sat upon the coral coping, his head between his hands. He realized that he had reached the end of his tether. He did not think he could have walked another hundred yards.

"You take the kid a moment, Second," Harvey was saying. "I'll borrow another boat."

Cochran held out his arms. Gina, without a murmur lay there contentedly.

"Aha! I've got you this time, miss!" Cochran grunted. "I've got you this time!" He folded the small body in his bloodstained arms. He laughed to himself, as though he could not deal with such happiness.

The voice of Harvey reached them in a rain-swept halloo. Glanvil followed Cochran's sturdy figure over the sodden sand. They clambered into a boat that lay awash, ankle-deep. They pushed off.

"My God, it isn't half blowing!" said Cochran.

EASILY and well they reached the *Vega*. Harvey, in the boat's bows, clutched at the receding ladder and brought her alongside. Glanvil himself clambered up first and took the child from Cochran. The red face of Hendry received him at the head of the ladder. His eyes showed in the lamplight full of stupid tears.

"Good luck, good luck, sir," was all that he could say.

"All hands on deck, Hendry. We sail at dawn," said Glanvil.

Hendry could only blink his surprise. Evidently Glanvil was mad.

"Sail at dawn, sir? In this?"

"What time is it?"

"Eight bells just gone, sir."

Four o'clock. "That gives you just over an hour. Let the chief engineer know."

He passed quickly to the door of his cabin with Gina in his arms. Mrs. Salvia was there on the locker. She had obeyed him. There was no woman like her. With her white, tragic face she came to meet him —without a sob, without a cry.

His voice broke with the ecstasy of triumph.

"Here she is," he said. "Take her!"

He turned away. The sight of that meeting was too heavy to be borne, but though he could not see, its violence penetrated him so that his eyes were blinded by tears. He heard her voice subdued to accents of an unknown tenderness. He would have left them together, but for the moment did not know where to go. Controlling an intolerable emotion, he stalked out into the alleyway and stood there waiting. Time no longer existed. Emerging from a dream, he heard her voice whisper his name. Almost fearing to face her, he reëntered the cabin. She had left the child on the locker, wrapped in one of his blankets. She stood meekly before him with a dreadful happiness in her eyes.

"Captain Glanvil, I must speak to you. . . . And I can't."

He smiled. It was impossible to meet her eyes in silence and yet he, too, could not speak.

"It's too much," she said. "How can I ever thank you! What can I give you in return?"

He laughed aloud. He heard the echo of his laughter and did not know his own voice.

"Yourself," he answered.

"Myself?" She closed her eyes and sighed. "Oh, willingly!" she said.

And so the mad world came to an end. In the mirror beyond her head he saw the reflection of a maniac in rain-sodden, blood-stained clothes; he saw a specter, with a wild face, slashed by thorns, a gaunt throat, burning eyes, and, in its arms, the figure of a woman. He could not believe that this phantom was himself.

HENDRY came to the door and knocked.

"Two bells, sir."

"Very good, I'm coming."

When Glanvil came out onto the windy deck the chief officer was waiting for him.

"I don't like the look of it, sir," he said, "and that's the honest truth."

"Don't like the look of what, Hendry?"

"This wind, sir. There's no sense in it. Five minutes ago it was on the port bow. Now it's astern. And the glass is behaving like a damned lunatic. It isn't as if this was an easy channel, sir."

He paused. Glanvil stood drumming with his fingers on the berthing rail, staring downward at the black water that washed through the lower steps of the gangway.

"What the devil's this ladder doing here? Man the falls and hoist it at once."

He mounted slowly to the bridge. The wind suddenly took him abeam with a terrific buffet. Hendry was right. He knew it. In such a wild confusion of pressures he could not guess for a moment what would come next. To attempt the passage of the Panda channel under these conditions was what any cautious seaman would consider madness.

Yet his fortunes were in the ascendant. Within the last hour he had attained what he believed to be the crowning moment of his life. On such a pinnacle of achievement he felt himself master of all the elements. And his task was not completed. If daylight showed the *Vega* still anchored in Panda, Cardozo and his rifles would soon be aboard—this time, perhaps, with a warrant for murder. Salvia was dead.

The thing that Hendry called prudence was really cowardice. All his life long he had taken too few risks. That was what had been wrong with it. The triumphs of the last few days had shown him his own strength; now he must test it in the field for which it had been particularly trained. He was a seaman; here he must show his seamanship.

Hendry came up behind him.

"You see how it is, sir? Joking apart, I think we'd better stand by for an hour or two."

"I'm not joking, Hendry. The tide's on the ebb, and I've no intention of losing it. You'd better tell the Third to take Cochran's station on—"

A roar of escaping steam drowned the end of Glanvil's sentence. Cheadle was blowing off. The sound cheered him. It showed him that steam was at his service.

"I was just saying," he continued as the uproar subsided, "that Harvey had better take Cochran's station on the poop. Cochran has a wound in the shoulder; he must have lost a lot of blood."

"Cochran went aft five minutes ago," Hendry answered in an aggrieved voice.

"Then you'd better go for'ard. I shall take the wheel myself."

Hendry departed, shaking his head as he went.

Glanvil felt happier now that he was alone. He knew well enough that Hendry's arguments were sane and valid. He did not wish to hear them. He would rather listen to the persuasions of his own hopes.

From another point of view the uncertain weather which made his departure so dangerous revealed itself as a godsend. In the ordinary way he could not have cleared from Panda without the official recognition of the port authorities. The behavior of the glass absolved him from these formalities. He could see his absolution as it would be written tomorrow in his log:

> . . . judging that a tornado threatened . . . danger of a landlocked anchorage . . . safety of the ship . . .

It was as clear as daylight. Assuredly his luck was in!

Out of the thinning blackness in front of him the bent bow of *Vumba* declared itself; the snout of *Ras M'zinga* lay on the water like a shadow of a cloud; between them a steely line of sea, dark, secret, inexorable, beneath whose broken surface his fate lay waiting for him. The trill of Glanvil's whistle went weakly down the wind. On poop and fo'c'sle-head Cochran and Hendry heard it. Like distant thunder the rumble of the anchor-cables began, and, in that moment, the *Vega* ceased to be a lifeless hulk of iron tethered to earth; she became a living creature, mobile and self-reliant; her bulk was one huge extension of Glanvil's body, and her brain was his.

NOW the sky glowed as though the wind had fanned its smolder. Blacker and clearer grew the snout of *Ras M'zinga*, a cloud no longer. Vasco da Gama's pillar leaped out in silhouette. In Glanvil's mind the channel seemed as clear as if the chart were spread gigantically before him. It was not for nothing that in moments of abstraction and distress his eyes had stared at the open pages of the Pilot. Hendry was an old woman, and that was all about it.

Now Hendry signaled from the fo'c'sle head. Cochran, half lost in shadow, followed him from the poop. Glanvil pulled over the telegraph lever to "Stand by!" He took the wheel. "Slow!" With a shudder of ecstasy or dread the *Vega* answered to her helm.

From that moment Glanvil had no time for thought. He was a man possessed. Through hands, ears, eyes, through every channel of sensation, his eager brain received the varied stimuli of the organism that he controlled. Into his fingers flowed the resistance of the *Vega's* helm; his ears, like watchful clerks, checked and recorded the leadsmen's cries; his eyes were set upon the sea's mysterious surface where the broken water of the *Cavallos Marinhos* slowly flushed with a baleful orange light.

In that possession there was no room for doubt. With the mechanical deliberation of an absolute certainty he steered the *Vega* onward. Slowly she stole between the horns of those converging headlands. Between them, gay and inviting, sparkled the gold of the open sea. In another five minutes . . . three minutes . . . two minutes . . . she would be through. Glanvil's heart glowed like the sky with pride and mastery. Now he scarcely listened to the leadsmen's cries. He could have told them, before they shouted, what the depth would be. One minute. The channel shallowed at the very moment that he expected. This was the bar. In another thirty seconds. . . .

A curious resistance, gentle, but unmistakable, like the application of a pneumatic brake. And then a sudden shudder.

"By God, sir, she's aground!" Harvey cried.

Already Glanvil's hand had rung through automatically to the engine room. "*Astern!*"

"Yes, Harvey, she's aground. We've done it this time."

And he knew that he could do no more. Her screw might churn the water impotently forever; but the silt of the Panda River had clutched her bows and would not let them go.

Hendry came running up the bridge, his mouth full of urgent advice. Glanvil did not answer him. There was nothing that Hendry could suggest which his mind had not assayed and discarded in the second that followed the disaster. Empty the forepeak? Jettison Cardozo's copra? All that was well enough, but already the tide was ebbing. In another hour the whole keel would be aground, sinking deeper and deeper into greedy silt. And then would come Cardozo, malignant, and triumphant at last. He rang to the engine-room: "*Stop!*"

"NO GOOD, Hendry, no good," he said. "Anchor astern. Make her as snug as we can. No miracles in these days."

Hendry and Harvey descended to the main deck; Glanvil turned to follow them.

But even as he spoke there came what seemed to him not a miracle, but an insensate aggravation of disaster. Some power of darkness, mightier than any wind conceivable, caught at his body and flung it with a crash into the railing of the bridge. He clutched at a stanchion and held it. It had no solidity. He and the stanchion and the shattered matchwood of the flying bridge were carried away together. In one clear moment of his fall he saw the wreckage of the ship's boats whirling above him like shredded kites. The next instant he was lying flat, clinging for life to the stripped fo'c'sle head. Beside him, green with terror, lay a Chinaman, naked to the waist.

It was curious. He couldn't understand. Ah, yes . . . Now it grew clear. Tornado. That spinning devil whose dark gyrations had upset the glass. A lunatic: Hendry's words. Well, now the destruction begun by his own pride and folly was complete. Her bows held in a vise, stern-on to that revolving fury. Stripped, shattered, everything gone by the board. What would Lloyds say about that? Nothing mattered. He'd lost his ticket anyway. Nothing. Helen Salvia?

That was too much. Not only a broken seaman but a murderer. It was impossible that the deck-houses could have stood that impact. He could not see; he could not open his eyes for wind. Was anything left, any one but this half-dead Chinaman and himself? If he could reach them! . . . If only he could reach them! For a moment he loosened his grip; the wind dragged him backward. No, no. . . .

Something had happened. The wind was losing power. The deck to which he clung was lifted bodily into the air. It rose and fell, not violently, but with a gentle fluidity. Impossible! But it was true. A wave that was like that of an earthquake took the *Vega* and swept her seaward. Straight out to sea she drifted, whirled like a feather on a pond. And, like a troubled feather, the wind left her with a scornful flick of its tail. She lay there, quietly heaving on the broken golden water, and Glanvil scrambled to his knees to see her shining in her white deck paint like an angel. Apart from the loss of the flying bridge and the boats she seemed to be unscathed.

With shaking limbs he picked his way aft through the heaped wreckage and climbed onto the main deck. At the same moment Hendry emerged from the saloon. He started as though Glanvil were a ghost.

"Thank Heaven, sir," he gasped. "Oh, my God, my God! I can't believe it. We thought you'd carried away, sir, with the bridge."

"Came down flat on the fo'c'sle head. No other damage done? Every one all right?"

"Every one, sir. The Third and I just reached the alleyway in time. It didn't hit the poop. It was the Second that saw you carried away. Thinking you'd gone, I was just hurrying up to the wheelhouse to take charge."

"Mrs. Salvia all right?"

"She and the child are in the saloon, sir. We didn't tell them what we thought had happened to you. This is an act of God, sir, in the proper meaning of the term. In my opinion, that is," he added hurriedly.

"I quite agree with you. An act of God."

SLOWLY Glanvil mounted the ladder to the wheelhouse. Just as if nothing had happened the quartermaster smiled and touched his cap. A phlegmatic race. . . .

He grasped the telegraph lever. Once more the harsh bell jangled below. With the rapidity of a healthy reflex the signal was answered. Words came into his mind. *I believe in the resurrection of the dead. Resurrection!*

That was the only word for it.

Glanvil glanced at the compass, then took the wheel in his own hands. He rang down to the engine room, three times in swift succession.

Slow. Half-speed. Full speed ahead.

THE END

Adventures of a Tramp on Horseback

King o' the Plain

What Chance Had Volstock to Tame an Unbroken Stallion with the Aid Only of a Silk Handkerchief?

By Arthur Mills

AT DAWN Donato and I rode out to watch the parting of some cattle. The old gaucho horse tamer had slept tranquilly in the doorway of his ranchito. The mosquitoes never bothered him, he said. We started, setting our horses to the easy loping canter they call out there the *galope*. A little breeze blowing in our faces was like a breath of heaven after the night; it seemed curious to feel cooler on the back of a cantering horse than lying motionless upon a bed.

We came to a tributary of the Parana just as a drove of wild horses arrived. Donato motioned me to stay still. The horses stood together on the river bank waiting for one to take the lead. Presently an old mare, with a bell about her neck, stepped cautiously into the water. Soon she was in mid-stream, head turned to the current, swimming strongly for the opposite bank. The remaining horses followed her, all but one. He was a black stallion, a superb animal from his beautiful head to his long black tail. An instant he stood, haughty and aloof, then followed his mates over the water.

We crossed the river in our turn and rode on, having for the remainder of the way the wild horses in front of us. A little to the right of the others, the black stallion galloped alone, mane and tail flying in the breeze.

"Whose horses are they?" I asked Donato.

They belonged to the Major Domo of St. Martin, he told me, and had none of them yet been tamed. Perhaps next week the peons would catch and saddle those they wanted.

"That one, too?" I pointed to the stallion, well knowing the question was silly, but curious to hear the old man's answer.

Donato shook his head. "No, señor, you cannot tame a stallion after he has been for a few years upon the plains; he becomes too proud." (I render the old man's meaning as best I can, though the word he used for "proud" has a stronger sense, easily understood by any one who has seen the unquenchable fire in a wild stallion's eye.)

We continued on our way till we came to the place where the peons were parting the cattle. As we arrived a young steer was giving particular trouble. Maybe he knew that no good could come to him once he permitted himself to be separated from his comrades. Certainly he fought gamely, darting to one side or the other, turning and twisting in and out of the herd, stopping dead in his tracks just as he seemed to be fairly set upon his way.

Round the steer, and by his side, two horsemen rode, sweat pouring from their faces, foam flecks flying from their horses' mouths, working desperately to get the beast between them so that, riding with knee pressed to flank, they might take him at full gallop out from the herd.

Donato watched their efforts, a twinkle of contempt lighting his keen old eyes. Not that the task of the peons was easy on their half-broken horses. There are men on the form list at Hurlingham riding their own perfectly schooled three-hundred-guinea polo ponies who would have made a sorrier mess of it. But Donato judged the handling of cattle in the light of his own hard experience, dating from the days when cattle were really wild, not the offspring of placid imported cows, when the gaucho cattle men rode with uncut hair flowing in the wind, after the fashion of their Indian fathers.

"Huh! At last!" he grunted, as he saw the peons emerge from the herd with the steer between them.

ON THEY came, reins held high, *rebenques* (rawhide riding whips) raised. The steer, trapped and maddened, strove desperately to turn back again to his comrades. But this was not possible, so long as the two horsemen kept exactly level and abreast his shoulders. The peons worked in perfect unison with scarcely an inch between their horses' heads—well for the life of each that they did.

Then, in the flash of a second, something went amiss. The peon on the side nearer to us seemed to get too much in front; the steer, keeping pace with the horse, drew in front of the man on the other side and, suddenly seeing his opening, whipped to the right.

Next instant there was a writhing mass upon the ground.

Donato watched the steer galloping away, pursued by the other peon, then looked toward man and horse lying motionless.

"They do not know even how to fall," he grunted.

This I thought hard, as the poor fellow had fallen as heavily as a man well could, and quite possibly was dead.

"How else could he have fallen?" I inquired.

"But upon his feet, señor, though for that matter with the cattle of today it makes little difference. In the old days, when they were less tame, it was not good for a man to fall upon his face among cattle."

Meanwhile, one or two other peons were endeavoring to head back the escaped steer; no one took the least notice of the man upon the ground. I suggested to Donato we should go over to him.

We came to the peon. Donato turned him over. I gave an exclamation. Out of the face of the man twisted with pain, and the three days' stubbly growth of flaxen beard, Volstock's eyes stared up at me.

We put our hands under his shoulders and got him to his feet. He could not stand alone, and signed to Donato to lead his horse toward him. Placing his hands on the sheepskin saddle he dragged himself by sheer strength of arm to the animal's back.

Together the three of us rode back to the pulpería. Gomez came out and took our horses. Volstock, leaning heavily upon my shoulder, entered the bar. Donato called for cana. Three glasses were filled. Volstock took his hand from my shoulder, but as he leaned forward to lift his drink, pitched forward to the floor.

From the back of the store a girl hurried forward, dark-eyed, olive-skinned, seventeen or eighteen years of age. As she bent over Volstock Donato told her in a few words what had happened.

"Who rode on the other side of the steer?" asked the girl.

"Miguel."

Her eyes lit indignantly. "You were watching? It was Miguel's fault?" she challenged.

Donato's bright black eyes twinkled. "That is a question you must ask Miguel's horse."

As the girl and her father carried Volstock to an inner room Donato turned to me.

"It was done on purpose, of course," he said.

"On purpose!"

"Why does a man spur his horse when he is already in front of another? Maybe some little quarrel they have had." Donato looked through the door significantly to where Leonita bent over the injured man.

I stayed that night at the pulpería. Though in the time I had been in Entre Rios, Volstock and I had not exchanged two dozen words, there was a curious friendship between us. Beyond that he was a gambler and had once been rich, I knew nothing about the Russian. On the great cattle estates of Argentina what a man has been is not the business of his fellows.

I knew, however, that between Volstock and Miguel there was bad blood, and like Donato guessed the cause. Miguel, being the son of the Major Domo at St. Martin, was a man whose position carried more weight than that of a mere peon drawing his forty dollars a month. Gomez, proprietor of the pulpería, was also a man of wealth, as all "camp" storekeepers are with their profiteering ways; and Leonita, his daughter, was very lovely.

That Volstock had any sincere desire to marry Leonita, I doubted. His attentions to her were prompted more by an impish delight in annoying Miguel, and bravado in showing that a mere peon could hold his own with the son of a Major Domo. But with Miguel the matter was more serious, Leonita possessing the dual attraction of her father's wealth and her own loveliness.

Old Gomez joined me later in the evening, reporting that Volstock was getting on well. "A little shaken, that is all;" he said. Shaken! The fellow had taken a fall to shake the teeth through a man's neck.

However, next day at eleven Volstock appeared, washed, shaven and spruce, to join the family at their midday meal.

WE WERE taking our maté when a dark, handsome fellow with coal-black hair and bright, dark eyes, swaggered across the patio, rolling a little in his cumbersome great spurs, his whip swinging from his wrist, a revolver shining aggressively in his belt.

He greeted us all and settled himself on a bench by Leonita. Seeing the newcomer was Miguel, I expected him to make some courteous reference to Volstock about yesterday's mishap. But the Spaniard did not even trouble to inquire about his colleague's health. He rolled a cigarette, lit it, and drew a draft of smoke into his lungs.

"My father has sent me to inquire the price of mules," he remarked to the company.

Gomez, taking the question seriously, at once offered information. Volstock watched Miguel's face.

"Why does your father want mules?" he asked.

"Because their backs are narrower, and a man may get a better grip of the saddle."

Gomez, feeling Volstock's eyes fixed upon him, repressed a smile. Volstock's face was expressionless as he looked at Miguel.

"Your father has then some men to whom the back of a horse comes strange?"

"He heard that one fell off yesterday," answered Miguel blandly.

Gomez sniggered. Leonita looked at her father furiously.

"*Fell* off!" repeated Volstock.

"So I am informed, though the horse may have fallen, too; as is often the way when too great weight is put upon a horse's ears."

Now in the "camp," where all men have ridden since they were four years old, a man does not lightly throw out a challenge to the horsemanship of others. There is something superfluous in such talk.

Watching Volstock's eyes, I saw the same light come into them there had been before he shot the capataz of the Tora. Fumbling leisurely in the pockets of his capacious riding breeches, he pulled out a roll of notes.

"Do they still have the sport of riding *potros* (unbroken horses) on Sundays in these parts?" he asked.

"I believe the *gringos* (tenderfeet) sometimes do," answered Miguel, "when they are not too sore from falling off during the week's work."

Miguel looked across at Leonita. Evidently the purpose of his visit was to make the Russian look ridiculous in front of her, for in the "camp" the women equally with the men despise a bad horseman. Indeed, in the most primitive of backwoods towns a film showing a man in difficulties on a horse will prove the comic success of the evening.

Volstock quietly counted his notes.

"I will bet one hundred dollars to ten, I can stay on a horse longer than you." His blue eyes fixed lazily on Miguel.

Little flashes like the sparks from a plug touching on a car cylinder came from Miguel's eyes. Volstock's remark was made in a manner that made it an insult. Had Miguel not noticed Volstock's hand resting with seeming casualness on his hip, he would have drawn his revolver.

"How do you suggest we arrange this interesting little trial of skill?" Miguel inquired.

Old Donato intervened: "The custom used to be for each man to point out the horse he wished the other to ride."

"That seems very fair," said Volstock. "Do you agree?"

Miguel nodded. Under his dark skin his face looked curiously white.

NEWS of the match spread quickly in the neighborhood, so that by noon on Sunday there must have been fully a hundred peons gathered at the pulpería.

At two o'clock we all mounted our horses and set out.

Donato explained the procedure to me on the way.

"You remember, señor, the horses that galloped in front of us on the morning we went to see the cattle being parted."

I nodded. "Those that had with them the black stallion and the old bell mare?"

"*Sí, señor.* Excepting the stallion who is savage, and the mare who is old and tame, they are all potros, perhaps four years at most; they have none of them had a saddle on their backs, or felt the pressure of a man's knees. The men here will round up the horses into a corner of the paddock. Miguel and Volstock will take it in turns to point out a horse; whichever is chosen, the other must ride. They will toss for who shall have the first choice."

We came to the great paddock where the unbroken horses were. The peons lined out like men beating pheasants through a wood and drove the horses in front of them. The young horses galloped wildly, shoulder to shoulder, the old mare trotted placidly behind; as before the black stallion kept aloof, galloping wide to the left of the potros, haughty, fierce, unconcerned.

A few minutes' work sufficed to collect the horses into a corner of the paddock, where the peons formed a half-circle of sentinels around them to keep them penned. Leonita was beside me, her father on my right. The storekeeper regarded the day's proceedings with disapproval. To Miguel, to win a hundred dollars or lose ten meant little; Volstock was in different case; the hundred dollars was the whole of any savings he possessed. He owed the storekeeper eighty dollars, which he had made no motion to repay. If he lost this foolish bet of his, Gomez would have to wait another month for his money, and even then might not get it, for with a wild fellow like this Russian, who would put his horse and saddlery and all his possessions on one throw of the taba (hock bone of a steer with which the peons gamble), there was never any certainty.

The bet in itself was foolishness. Why, just for the pleasure of offering an insult, lay ten to one against the horsemanship of a man like Miguel, whose skill in riding any sort of animal was admitted throughout the district?

"Miguel has the first choice," said Donato, coming back from watching the toss of the coin. "Huh! They all have the air of sheep," he added, regarding the drove of potros. "See how fat they are from eating too much grass; it is always so after a heavy rain."

I said nothing; never in my wildest moments would I have contradicted any opinion Donato expressed on horses, though the potros looked like anything but sheep to me.

"In the old days before Salto was a town," continued Donato, "I have seen a man ride up to a *boliche* (drinking booth), tie a knot in the tail of his horse, touch him with his spur, and sit there while he bucked for twenty minutes; then he would dismount and wash the blood from his mouth with the bottle of cana he had won by remaining in the saddle."

"Why did he tie the knot in the horse's tail?"

"To keep it from dragging in the mud. Look! Miguel has chosen."

Following Donato's glance, I saw Miguel pointing out a young chestnut colt to Volstock.

VOLSTOCK nodded and, slipping his hand to the back of his saddle, unfastened his lasso. The peons tightened the cordon round the horses. Volstock, swinging the lasso slowly above his head, went forward. He rode right into the middle of the group of horses, indifferent to the chance of kicks, and caught the colt's neck with the first throw of the lasso.

Then the fight began. Not for nothing was a young, high-couraged horse, that in his short wild life on the great plain had never known a restraining hand, going to submit at the asking to the mastery of man. First the colt plunged in and out among his fellows, rearing, kicking, till the thud of hoof on flesh horrified my ears; finally he broke loose and dashed out over the plain. Volstock riding like the wind just behind him, skilfully keeping the lasso taut, but not taut to the strangling point. Gradually the pressure of the noose round the slender throat prevailed; the colt's breath came in rasping gasps, and after a while he stood still. A second peon galloping out flung another lasso round his legs; a quick twist and the colt lay on the ground. To fasten the *bocado* (rawhide bit) round his jaw was the work of a second; then the colt was allowed to rise, his forelegs and neck still secured by lassos. Quick as lightning a saddle was clapped on his back; one deft tug at the surcingle, and Volstock leaped into the saddle.

FOR a moment the colt, utterly dumfounded by this strange live thing on his back, stood still. A rebenque rose and fell upon his flank. Shrill cries "Ee! Ah! Ee! Ha!" came from the throats of a score of peons. The colt gave a bound in the air, all four legs stiff, head between his knees. Volstock drove his spurs cunningly into the girths so that he secured a purchase without injury to the satin flanks. In the fight that followed, the man and the plunging, rearing, bucking horse seemed one.

"Ee! Ah! Ee-ah!" the peons called, as Volstock plied his rebenque and tugged and strained to get the colt's head up from between his knees.

Miguel watched calmly. Not for nothing had he picked that chestnut colt. If Volstock could stay on he would do well. The more temper an animal had the harder he was to master and if he, Miguel, was any judge of such matters he had seen temper for ten gleaming from the whites of that chestnut's eyes.

But Volstock stayed on, though his teeth rattled and the world grew black, though his knees were raw and his hands turned to jelly by the rawhide reins. And in the end he won, for the colt after one last mad gallop round the paddock, came suddenly of his own accord to a standstill, eyes startled, sweating, shivering in every limb—in the words of Donato, "tamed."

Volstock jumped to the ground, patted the colt, and rolled across, as well as his great spurs allowed him, to where we stood. A little smile lurked in the corners of his eyes, just such a smile as I had seen in them the instant before he shot the capataz. Somehow I began to feel almost sorry for Miguel. What deviltry was this Russian planning now?

Miguel, dark, sinister, scowling, waited his approach. He had picked the worst horse of the lot and Volstock had ridden him as if he had been a mule.

"It is your choice, señor," he said.

"My choice." Volstock looked thoughtfully at the horses, stroking his chin with the point of his whip. "Really, señor, if they are all as quiet as that one I hardly care to trouble you."

"It was agreed we should each ride in turn," answered Miguel; "perhaps when we have ridden a dozen or more apiece we shall discover one more lively, or at least who will seem more lively, as our limbs begin to ache."

"Señor, I should not wish you to suffer from fatigue, but as you insist—and it is your turn as you say—will you"—Volstock paused, looking carefully at the horses—"will you be so good as to ride the *madrina* there?"

We stared, all of us, at Volstock in amazement, Leonita, Gomez, Donato, Miguel and myself. I for one could hardly believe my ears. Yet Volstock's whip pointed unerringly at the old bell mare.

Suddenly Donato gave a great guffaw. "The madrina! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

ONCE again, if Volstock's hand had not been lying lightly on his hip, this story might have ended. For on the cattle plains of Argentina you cannot insult a *domador* (horse tamer) more than by asking him to ride a mare. I do not suppose in all his seventy-odd years old Donato had ever done so. And such a mare, too, the old madrina with the bell round her neck, that was just kept to be a sort of godmother for the young colts.

Miguel managed a sort of twisted smile.

"The señor is witty at my expense. Which horse does he really wish that I should ride?"

"But the madrina, I have said," answered Volstock.

Now Miguel took his whip and flung it on the ground, his face flaming with rage.

"The joke is no longer funny. Please choose the horse."

"I have chosen; if you do not like my choice please pay the bet; it was agreed between us that each should ride in turn the horse chosen by the other."

It was clear now that Volstock was in earnest, though his motive remained obscure. I imagine he intended to revenge himself for Miguel's taunts about his horsemanship. In which case he certainly succeeded. Miguel had either to admit himself fooled and pay up, or under the eyes of a hundred peons, and with Leonita's smile goading him to fury, climb on to the back of the old brood mare. For several minutes he hesitated, and then a gleam came in his eye, as dangerous as the smile that had lit the blue eyes of Volstock a little while before.

"As you will, señor. And when I have ridden the mare it will be my turn to choose your mount."

"That is what we agreed," answered Volstock.

Miguel walked over to the madrina, adjusted his saddle and climbed on to her back. Giving the mare a rap with his whip, he cantered round the paddock and came to a standstill in front of us.

He jumped to the ground. At first he was hardly able to speak for rage. Volstock addressed him blandly.

"Now, señor, the choice is with you."

Miguel turned his dark eyes on the Russian.

"I have finished with this fooling."

"Finished! You are satisfied then that I am the better horseman."

"No, señor; but I do not choose to try further tests with you."

"They are not severe enough, perhaps. Señorita"—Volstock looked at Leonita—"will you lend me that handkerchief that is round your pretty neck?"

Leonita was wearing one of the colored silk handkerchiefs which are specially prized by the Spanish-American girls on the "camp." For a peon to give a girl one of these handkerchiefs, or to ask for the one she is wearing, implies a high degree of intimacy.

Miguel watched furiously as Leonita unfastened the scarf and handed it to the Russian.

Volstock ran the handkerchief through his hands.

"Señor, as you say, what we have done so far is easy. Any man can ride a horse that has first been secured by the lasso and thrown to the ground. Shall we try some other experiment? This handkerchief now is not much with which to hold an untamed horse. I laid the odds to you just now. Do you care to return the compliment? Bet me, say, a thousand dollars to a hundred that I will not stay for two minutes on the back of a horse using only this?" He held up the handkerchief.

Miguel looked contemptuously at the piece of silk.

"Out here we do not ride horses with women's frills."

"No, señor, that is evident. When your turn comes you shall have saddle, lasso, bocado, men to help you, what you wish. I only say that without the aid of these things, which to you seem imperative, I can do the same. Unless, that is, Don Miguel is afraid to try conclusions."

"Afraid! And upon what horse do you propose to try this foolery?" sneered Miguel.

"Any horse you may name, señor."

"Any horse I may name."

I did not like the look in Miguel's eye as he spoke, though certainly Volstock was to blame, for he had goaded the Spaniard past the endurance of an average man.

MIGUEL looked toward the horses gathered in the corner. I was certain that some devilish suggestion was coming.

"The horse I will ask the señor to ride," he said, "is that one over there." He pointed his whip at the black stallion standing aloof from the others upon a knoll.

Leonita gave a cry; Gomez opened his mouth; Donato intervened.

"It is not usual, señor, to ask a man to ride the stallion of a drove of horses; the animal is savage."

"Nor is it usual to ask a man to ride an old bell mare," replied Miguel.

"The one was a jest, señor; the man who attempts to get on the back of that stallion will lose his life."

Miguel shrugged his shoulder. "Señor Volstock can, if he pleases, pay his money."

Volstock came forward.

I put my hand on his arm. "For heaven's sake, man, don't be a fool! The horse will kill you for a certainty."

But the gambler's light was shining in Volstock's eyes. The matter had gone too far for any words of mine to take effect.

He walked to within ten paces of the stallion and looked at the horse carefully.

"He seems sound," he said, "though I do not feel tempted to try and lift his legs. If Don Miguel will lay the horse against my hundred dollars that I do not stay on his back two minutes, I shall be content."

"That horse is worth five thousand dollars," said Miguel.

"I will gladly lay Don Miguel five thousand dollars to a peso he dare not get on his back at all," said Volstock.

Miguel flushed again. "And I will lay you the horse to your hundred dollars; they will at least be something to pay your funeral expenses."

Leonita came to Volstock, her arms outstretched.

"Don't! He wants to kill you, that is all."

"Others have wanted to, señorita," Volstock answered.

Plainly the matter had now passed out of our hands.

Volstock looked thoughtfully at the stallion. Watching his face, I thought he knew he had taken on one of the most awkward propositions in even his mad career.

"*Che!*" Volstock turned to me, using that little peculiar word which in Argentina conveys everything in friendship. "Will you ride to the pulpería and fetch me a bag of sugar?"

"Haw-haw-haw!" guffawed Donato.

Volstock smiled pleasantly; he turned to Leonita.

"Señorita, I will try not to hurt this pretty handkerchief of yours."

The scene that followed reminded me of David and Goliath. I shall never forget the expression on the faces of those peons as Volstock approached the stallion with only a silk handkerchief.

The peons were clustered on a knoll, and they stared and stared. Where was his lasso? How else could he catch a wild horse? Why had he taken off his spurs? He had no rebenque. They were mystified.

But Donato, who knew all things, was frankly scornful.

"Huh!" he grunted. "Your English way of taming horses is no good for these."

I said nothing, for I never contradicted the old man.

Volstock was now quite close to the stallion.

The man and the horse regarded one another impassively. Presently Volstock took a step forward, then another, till he was within a few feet of the beautiful black legs. The stallion's ears lay flat now against his graceful head; his satin lips were curled back on his white teeth. Then at the next step Volstock took he struck forward—viciously with his near foreleg. Volstock had judged his distance and dodged. He now poured some of the sugar from the bag into his palm and came forward once more, hand outstretched; some three feet from the stallion he halted. Again the pair looked at one another. Then the horse took a step forward. His mouth was open, and that he would bite the man's hand off at the wrist appeared a certainty.

VOLSTOCK never moved a muscle; his outstretched hand was as steady as if it lay upon a rest. The horse made a quick snatch, and it seemed as if his jaws paused in the very act of engulfing Volstock's hand. Instead, he sniffed the sugar, licked a morsel suspiciously, and finally ate the lot. When he had finished Volstock gingerly lifted his other hand which held the handkerchief. The stallion whipped round and departed, heels in the air.

Once more the whole business began. But there is no need to repeat the details. Suffice it that at the end of two hours Volstock had got the stallion to stand while he gently rubbed his nose and patted his belly.

Now, as I imagined, I saw what the silk handkerchief was for. Using it at first as a caress, Volstock rubbed harder and harder, particularly the back and withers. At any moment a kick from those wicked heels might have ended his activities—or a snatch of that jaw torn a limb from his body. But beyond nipping at him in play, as horses will at one another, the stallion showed no vice.

Still there was a vast gulf between this stage and getting on his back.

I had seen a man ride a horse on a silk handkerchief before, slipping the handkerchief into his mouth, and by the unexpected gentleness of the control surprising the horse into docility. But that was with a horse that was already tame, not an animal such as this. I doubted if Volstock would ever get on his back at all. Even if he did the stallion would throw him instantly, and with the man at the horse's mercy on the ground the rest would not be good to watch.

Now it seemed Volstock was working toward a special point. He rubbed the horse's ears, his throat, the white between his eyes. Now and again he laid the handkerchief over the horse's head and left it there.

Then suddenly we saw the handkerchief was tied, tight round the stallion's eyes.

And next second Volstock had jumped upon his back. The horse, blindfolded, stood motionless. Volstock calmly took out his watch. At the end of the two minutes he jumped to the ground, unfastened the handkerchief, and with a graceful bow returned it to Leonita.

Gomez, the peons, Miguel, seemed utterly dumfounded.

Even the stallion stayed still an instant before he gave a great bound and galloped off over the plain. I was as speechless as the rest. Then a great laugh rang out.

"Haw-haw-haw!" guffawed Donato, holding his sides.

Seeing me stare at him, he inquired:

"Do they not do that in your English stables when there is a fire?"

Coming in January

Besides the new serial, "The Phantom Caravan," by Howard Vincent O'Brien (see announcement on page 86), there will be—

A Complete Novel

Land's End
By William Almon Wolff
Strange things happen when Pete Ashe disregards all warnings and spends his last cent on a Long Island house

Seven Short Stories

Squirrel Teeth
By Sam Carson
It's strange how much a man will do for a woman he thinks he loves!

The Star-Maker
By Gayne Dexter
Milton Glaze, creator of movie stars, plans a knockout campaign and forgets the most important factor

The Shah Is Dead: Checkmate!
By Ellis O. Briggs
Life and death rest upon a game of chess played by a British colonel and a "Persian" beggar

Trade
By Alan Sullivan
One lump of quartz teaches an Indian trapper a lesson in commercialism

Hard As Nails
By Elsa Barker
A hard-hearted landlady discovers that in one respect she is as soft as putty

Reconstruction
By Stephen M. Walmsley
Life reveals something more important than physical beauty to a man who has lost it

The Linoleum Trail
By Stoddard Goodhue
A nervy girl walks into a trap—and out again

And two serials: "March Winds," by Francis R. Bellamy, and "The Doctor Disagrees," by Robert A. Simon

January *EVERYBODY'S*   Out December 15

A Novelette

The Seeds of Greatness

An Essential to First-Rate Fiction Is a Winning Character—a Character So Attractive, So Interesting, That It Will Live in the Reader's Mind. Such a Character, Found in an Obscure Restaurant, Makes This a Big Story

By Ralph Barstow

Illustration by H. Weston Taylor

IT HAD been a queer day for Evan Goodwin. A business man had broken his word and had striven childishly to justify his act. Goodwin had been called in as conciliator and arbitrator, and from three till seven an exhausting, humiliating duel of clashing wills fought itself out before him, ending in a compromise that was disgusting to his sense of fairness, and breeding bad faith and more trouble for the future. His reasonable suggestions, his appeals to honor and to the necessity of keeping one's word had withered like leaves in a fire before the reckless desire of the man who had broken his word to keep it broken.

So Goodwin had left that office, sick of humanity at its worst, ashamed that he had failed to influence the situation to its proper conclusion and conscious of a nervous headache that meant he was in need of food and relaxation of nerves. As he walked uptown, the only places still alive and alight were the cafeterias and restaurants. The repeated impression of food gradually reached his attention, and he went into the next restaurant.

At the back, the bus boys were already closing up, removing the linen, and stacking the chairs atop the tables, and there were but two other customers in the place. As he sat down, he glanced in the mirror at his side and saw how tired he looked. There came to him an objective sense of his image, one of those infrequent moments when we look at ourselves and see ourselves with the eyes of a stranger.

"I'm not bad-looking," he whispered to himself, and smiled whimsically and deprecatingly.

In truth, he was not. He saw a man of thirty-two, with well kept hair gradually receding up his forehead; clear, friendly brown eyes, a good straight nose, and mobile, expressive lips. About the outer corners of the eyes and the lips, little character wrinkles were forming. They told of frequent smiles breaking through a normal soberness and intensity of expression. The head and neck gave the impression of just escaping thinness—as if the man lived an active and healthy life in the heritage of a fine, high-bred line of forebears. There was no touch of grossness anywhere; if fault there was, it lay in impersonality and aloofness.

"Did you want something?" asked a voice that interrupted his musing.

He looked up. A menu lay before him, a glass of water, a napkin and silverware fell into their ordered places with the precision of trained soldiers. His eyes traveled

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up a well shaped arm, past a clean and crisp white waist, a well rounded throat until they encountered the full brown eyes of his waitress. Those eyes smiled at him although the expression of the face did not change. Goodwin, for his part, smiled outright.

"I beg your pardon; I was thinking of something else," he said.

It must have been his condition that (like abraded skin) made him acutely conscious of the magnetism that radiated from the girl in front of him. She was clean, but beyond that, she displayed not a sign of coquetry nor feminine allurement in a city where personal attractiveness has been raised almost to a science by women. And yet he felt himself touched by a personality; yes, enveloped, bathed in it as one is affected by warm sunlight on a soft spring morning.

This girl made no advances, spoke no words—it seemed as if the effusion of magnetism was unconscious.

He shook himself impatiently and felt a touch of surprise at his interest. Finally, he forced the whole impression from his mind, ate his food and departed.

THE remembrance, however, refused to be thrust out. It returned next day, the next and the third day found him wandering downtown in search of the restaurant to discover if he had been dreaming. He couldn't find the place and returned to his room baffled, unquiet and considerably upset—half irritated and half amused. By dint of several wasted dinners at most unsatisfactory places, he finally found the restaurant and the waitress. To his astonishment, his impression was deepened and intensified! The girl had something that no other woman had ever communicated to him; something that pervaded and was not to be denied.

He made a little conversation about the closing hour and the number of things on the menu that were "out," and found her to be the possessor of a pleasant contralto voice and an accent that he could not place. It was not German nor Latin, and it certainly did not sound like the British Isles. She talked without self-consciousness and without forwardness and was as friendly as a kitten. She did not assume that Goodwin was flirting with her but seemed to feel that he was friendly and spoke because he had something to say. She answered him in the same key.

It was an entirely new attack to Goodwin, who knew women as provocative, aloof, tremendously interested, or faintly patronizing, but always giving him the impression of the duello. Not since his encounter at close range with the twelve-year-old daughter of his brother, the previous summer, had he recalled a levelness, directness, genuineness and sincerity equaling those of the waitress who made her conversational moves as if they were not moves at all but natural expressions of what she thought. "Has she reserves, intimacies that she keeps to herself, or is her whole being like this?" he asked himself. Aloud, he asked:

"You were not born in this country?"

"Oh, no!" was the ready reply. "I have been nine years here in New York. I cannot speak English too well. I was born in Russia."

"On the contrary," said Goodwin, "your accent makes English piquant."

There was no slurring, no thickness—it was dainty and acutely meaningful. Each word suggested and stimulated colorful associations in his mind.

"But," he did not hesitate to add, "you do not speak English as if you originally spoke Yiddish."

"I am Jewish by love but not by birth. My people were Russians; but they died and Jewish people loved me and took care of me, so I grew up with them."

Frankness, genuineness, openness—how much had these to do with charm and magnetism? The charm grew as she talked. Goodwin realized that with many women his interest waned as they developed themselves. And yet, it seemed fantastical and unreal: the many electric lights, the multiplying effect of the mirrors, the semiprofessional relation that, after all, existed between server and customer. It was a dream sensation.

Commonplace physical acts restore sanity. Eating his dinner brought him back to the life he lived and its matter-of-fact properties. With a smile, he left his tip, took his check and departed.

Business requirements, conventions, habit and engagements all fought him as he subsequently thought of his Russian waitress. Only one feeling spoke for her; the interest of touching a new world and—yes, a new friend. That feeling held out against every wave of argument the old world of his life poured over him. It did not even waver. A very storm of arguments would dash against and over it—and, as the spray subsided, there was the feeling of warm interest and liking, unshaken, unperturbed.

A. G. MacNAUGHTON, the man who wrote his signature all over the bottom of a letter like those in the Declaration of Independence, was the partner of Goodwin in their legal enterprises, the canny Scotsman who always saw the unseeable holes in a brief, loved many women with the same fervor that Goodwin exhibited in loving none. Archie was a bit like Browning's "Last Duchess," who had, as you remember, "a heart too easily impressed"—so much so, in fact, that no woman had succeeded in holding his attention long enough to get him to the ring stage of attachment. The fire that blazed for one, readily kindled a spark for another, and, like the spring "burn over" on the country-club course, before one blaze had burnt out, two more were crackling merrily.

Evan felt almost that he was wasting his time taking Archie to see Sara. Approval guaranteed itself in advance, once the little matter of social status was gotten over. In truth, he feared a little the possibility that, once Archie was disclosed, he might fade from the foreground.

The "little matter of social status" was debated before they walked down the Avenue toward the restaurant. It was not so easily overcome after all!

"The thing is nonsense," said Archie. "You've got yourself into a state of nerves such as only a fool of a hermit like you could do. There's nothing wrong with waitresses; no more than there is with foundrymen or secretaries of religious organizations. The world's work must be done and all work is honorable and all that. That isn't the matter. It's just this: your foundryman and waitress haven't the time nor the opportunity to make themselves intellectually companionable to a person like you—not for long. Novelty is one thing; stability is another."

Evan was dogged. "Come on down and we shall see what there is to be seen. Then you can tell."

So down they walked, and for the first time there was an embarrassment between them—silent but real.

Probably restaurants have their days just as people do. This had been one of "those days" when things had gone wrong. Not that it had much affected Sara's calm, but—the waist was not so crisp and fresh. Evan admitted, too, to MacNaughton that you "have to be just a bit hungry to enjoy the cooking," but by and large, the place bore up with a fair amount of backbone under the inspection of the two out-of-place uptowners.

Sara's smile was as direct and sincere, her conversation and friendly manner were as natural as ever. She was neither impressed nor depressed by Archie MacNaughton. She even sat down and chatted with the two men in the friendly way that is permitted downtown when there is a lull in business.

Outside again, Evan turned, mutely expectant, to Archie. Archie called a taxi. He thrust Evan into it.

"Woof!" he said. "Why, you poor half-starved goat! I had never thought of it before, but I'll bet if your scrubwoman had given you a smile, you would have declared that she had personality."

The taxi jolted across broken asphalt and Evan preserved a stubborn silence.

"Personality! Good God!" exclaimed Archie.

Evan, thus crowded, came to the defense.

"That's your silly feeling that all waitresses are alike. Put an intelligent girl like that in decent surroundings for a few weeks and you'd fall all over yourself for her."

"Ah, then you assume that she *has* intelligence?"

"That's not an unfair belief. She certainly isn't stupid. You can see that from her general manner. Great Scott! Archie, if you had been brought up in the Kentucky mountains, you wouldn't be the sort of a man you are now. There isn't nearly so much in heredity as there is in environment. Of course, there's got to be the native intelligence—that is a matter of birth; but after that, if you've any sense at all, environment will do the business. I think it is a shame that girls—yes, and boys too, can't have a better chance."

"Well, old philanthropist, why don't

you found a school and make your Sara the first pupil?"

"It isn't so ridiculous nor so impossible as you make it out. That girl could hold her own in any social affair with six months' real training."

"My lad, have you ever heard of rich young fools marrying chorus girls, engaging social secretaries for them, and trying to make ladies out of them? I'll admit, for the sake of argument, that it would be possible to take this girl and put a veneer of convention on her—yes, you could dress her up and lead her to a beauty specialist and make something physically presentable out of her—and then, you know what would happen, don't you?"

Evan frowned. "You mistake the point of the argument, Archie. You're not reasoning straight. You want me to agree that under the first stress or strain, she'd revert to type—'go back to the blanket.' You figure that if she got excited, she'd talk in brogue—but you forget she hasn't any brogue now."

"Always allowing for miracles," said canny Archie, "people fit the level they like best. A person can grow gradually into something better, but he can't be kicked into it overnight; and you can't do in a few years what it takes several generations to do by the natural process."

The taxi drew up at Archie's apartment. He got out, slammed the door, and stuck his head back in the window. "Lay off this, you old fool, or you'll stub your toe," he said, and to the taxi driver: "Take him home."

UNDER the circumstances, Evan did not feel that Sara was a subject for further discussion with his partner. At times he tried to agree with Archie on the wisdom of forgetting the whole matter.

Some of his doubts were set at rest summarily when he met her one afternoon on Thirty-fourth Street as he swung past the Waldorf-Astoria. He wasn't expecting to meet any one; consequently he was not on the alert. She was almost abreast of him before he realized who she was, and by the time he had got his hat off she had gone on without seeming to recognize him.

"'The first hundred men up Fleet Street'—Dr. Johnson was right. By gosh! You couldn't tell her from any of a hundred women that I have passed."

In this Evan did Sara an injustice, for in style and appearance she was superior to a number of the pedestrians. Her slim figure was attired in a smooth brown suit of the tailor-made type, crisp, freshly laundered collar and cuffs peeping out, high brown shoes laced neatly around her trim ankles; and the little brown feathery toque, set at an almost impish angle, gave one the impression that it was premeditated. With an easy carriage and a deftness in traffic, she showed restaurant training in a new light!

He wondered if she had recognized him or if he were merely an association of the dining table.

A few days later as he slid a little uncomfortably into his accustomed chair, she settled it for him by remarking:

"You passed me on Thirty-fourth Street the other day."

"Yes, I did. I didn't recognize you until you had gone on. You know, I've only seen you—"

"Oh, yes!" said Sara, with a facile gesture over her waitress's uniform. "You would not think I go out in such clothes?"

"Why, no!"

"These I leave downstairs. But I am not stylish—no. I do not think it is pretty to show all the leg, nor do I like much to see the bare arms."

"You must be in the minority here," said Goodwin, laughing.

"I am in the restaurant, here," she replied, not understanding him.

The matter of getting her away from the restaurant turned out to be absurdly easy. She practically invited herself, for he had no more than stumblingly mentioned the theater when she named the reigning success of the Theatre Guild and added:

"Perhaps you would like to take me."

Evan was shocked. He did not know whether this was directness or whether his attentiveness had been noticed and put to work. Being a good sport at heart, he made the invitation without hesitation.

It was in the theater that Evan took the final plunge—a move that was to make a big difference in his life.

The evening had gone exceptionally well, after the first discomfiture of meeting her at the restaurant door. However, as she came out, he might have been meeting any one in the wide world. He couldn't realize that uniforms go with jobs and not with people, although at a later date his memory flashed him a quotation of some one's about "uniforms making people invisible."

Evidently she had two costumes, for she was not clothed as he had seen her on Thirty-fourth Street. There was a little more festivity about her appearance. The cape itself rather surprised him—a nice wrappy affair with fur trimming; and beneath it he discovered a modish gown of clinging black satin. Probably, on any woman of his class, Evan wouldn't have noticed it at all, which was the highest compliment he could have paid her; but on Sara, he was impressed by its good taste and the way it set off a most agreeable figure. As they went down the aisle of the theater, his head was up and he met all glances fearlessly.

At first he was not sure, but with the progress of the action of the play, he became convinced that she was leaning in his direction, and the touch of her shoulder against his, and later of her knee, gave him the oddest sensation he had ever experienced. He was in complete uncertainty as to whether it was intended or not.

When he stole a glance at her face, he was amazed. Without any grotesqueness or overemphasis, the emotional content of the play was mirrored in her countenance. The lips repeated no sentences, but lips and eyes and forehead and cheek muscles responded plastically to the action on the stage. From then on, Evan heard the unfolding of the plot with his ears, but saw its action as interpreted by Sara. At times, she seemed to swell and pervade the whole section. Again, she shrank and shriveled until one got the impression of a mere wisp of a person. It was clear that she was extremely sensitive, that she responded automatically to every suggestion on the stage; and yet it did not occur to Evan that it was anything more than response.

Hers was the humor of the Oriental—the sardonic and tragic. There were moments in the play that purported to be low comedy which were in reality high irony, and of these she missed not one—a fact he discovered by the way she emphasized them by a slightly increasing pressure on his right shoulder.

At the close of the second act, Evan made a resolution. It was that he should discard the waitress, and cultivate the woman. Embarked on this desperate affair, he invited her to a cabaret after the show. Again she surprised him. She danced far better than he, and once or twice, when the orchestra produced those impudences of jazz, founded on themes of the great musicians, it was she who announced the originals, disclosing a knowledge of finer music that with Evan was merely a superficial index.

She turned out to be about his height. No awkwardness—she anticipated his moves perfectly. It was a genuine sorrow to Evan when the encores ended.

OVER the teacups he made his proposition: "Do you always want to work in the restaurant, Sara?"

"Oh, no!" she said. "I am going to be cashier."

"Ah, and after that, what?"

"That I do not know. I must save my money, I must go to school. Many of the girls who come in at noon are quick-writers, you know."

"Stenographers?" interpolated Evan.

"Yes. I could be a quick-writer."

She looked at him a little wistfully. The wistfulness was the final clincher.

"How would you like to make an experiment for me?" he asked, a little shakily. "I think you are a better person than your job—you know what I mean."

Sara smiled a slightly ironical oriental smile. "I could be something better than a waitress?"

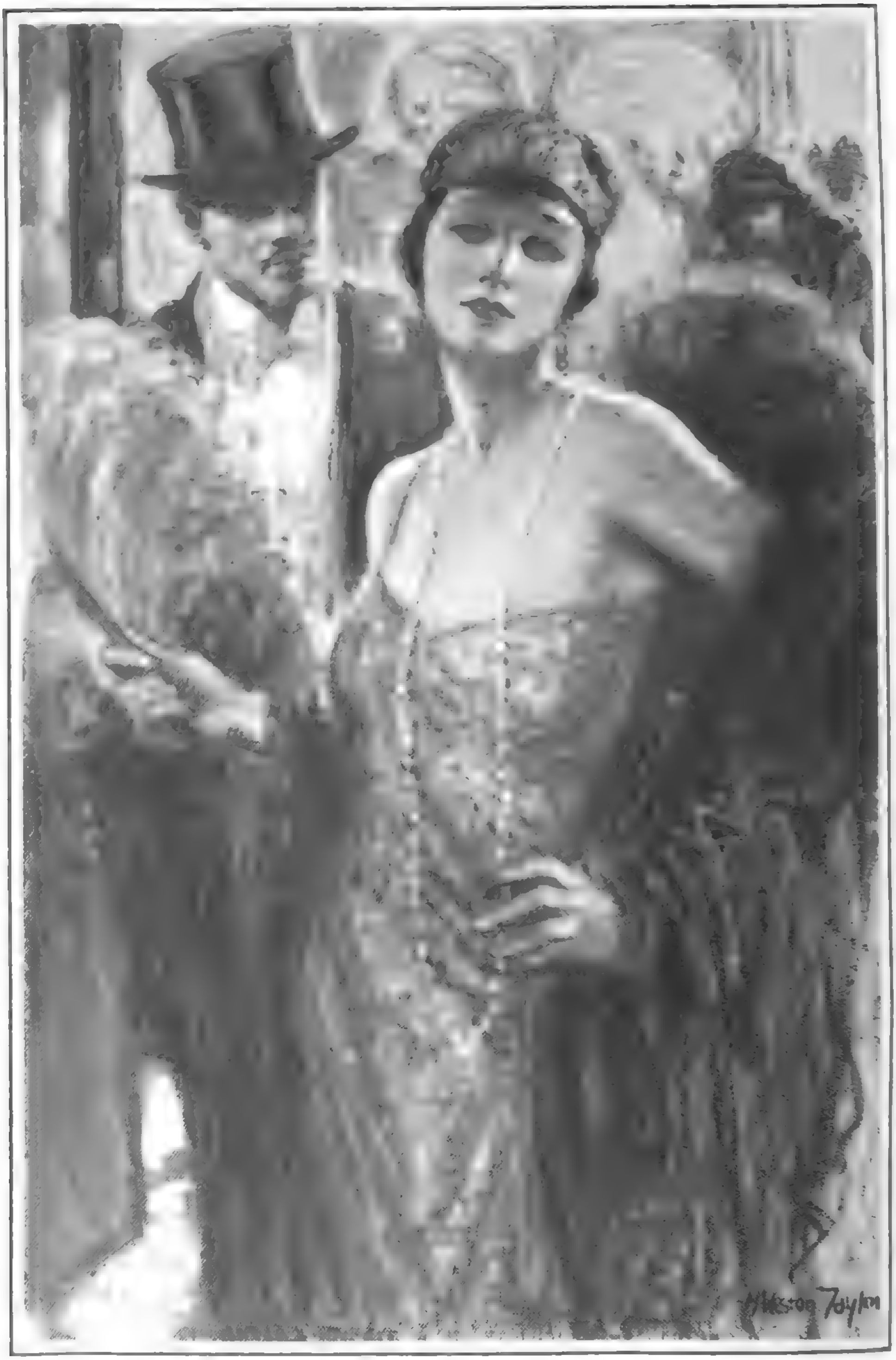
"Yes, that's it exactly. Wouldn't you *like* to be something better than a waitress?"

Sara smiled again with just the least heightening of the irony. "You mean—forgive me—also that I could be something better than a mistress?"

Evan's jaw dropped and he stared at Sara in silence.

Sara sensed that he was shocked, and explained: "You have never been in a restaurant—you are not a girl—you do not know how many times there are men who—" She lifted her shoulders. "They will take you to the theater, to the cabaret, and then—" She sat back in her chair, and said a little primly, "I am *not* a mistress."

A load rolled away from Evan's heart.



"It's a long day since I've been a stage-door Johnnie, Sara," Archie said, as she came out after the show, "but for you, I'll do it."

"Thank God for that!" he said. "No, that is not what I am suggesting, Sara, and I want to help you."

Sara leaned forward for the answer. Now she sank back again. "Ah, you do not love me! You can make money some way out of me."

Again Evan flushed. "Lord, no! How could I do that?"

"I do not know. You might think I could do something—dance or sing, or be a model; you are different. The artists, they come and say I shall pose; the actor, he comes and says I shall sing with him—"

"Good heavens! Do all men make advances to you, Sara?"

"No," said Sara, composedly, "only those who make me curious. The others, they get no chance."

Here was a sophistication and a knowledge of the seamy side of life that had been denied Evan. He was not up to telling *himself* that he loved her; how then could he tell it to her? He balked even the idea in his conscious mind—who knows what lightning was playing within his subconscious?

Sara had a good appetite. Another marvel. To think that one who served food all day could possibly eat at night! But she ate her salad zestfully and lingered over her café parfait. During this time, Evan made two more attempts to get her to see an altruism in his motives. She stubbornly refused to accept his idea that he was prompted by broad philosophic motives. She looked wistfully at him.

"I thought perhaps you came so much to the restaurant because you liked me."

"Oh, I do!" interrupted Evan.

"Then I said to myself; 'Perhaps, he loves me.' Ah, you do not like that. You think I am fresh, is it not? I am not fresh. I am lonely."

FOR a moment Evan stared at her without speaking. He was like a man who discovers some new thing. He sees its greatness as he holds it in his hand, but it frightens him; he sees grave dangers and embarrassments attendant upon its possession, and while his heart cries for it, his mind warns him of the danger. When he found voice, he said:

"You must see, Sara, that I am very much impressed with you. I think you have possibilities far above anything you can do in a restaurant, but after all, I have only known you a little while. You have been brought up one way, and I another. It would not be right for me to talk to you of love."

In the long pause that followed, it was Evan who lowered his eyes first. With a gesture of renunciation, Sara said:

"Of course—yes—we must not talk of love. I will not speak of it again. Forgive me my mistake."

She did not agonize nor sulk, but in that moment she took a resolution to which she stuck a long time.

She, it was, who offered the way out of the first puzzle which had been confronting Evan, and that was how to get her to leave the restaurant.

It appeared that she had been thriftily saving her money for some time, and, fired by his suggestions, she now made the decision to get her commercial education at once. She clung to her belief in "quick-writing" with a tenacity that puzzled Evan, until she explained, "After all, you might not like me, and then I can work in some office."

She had already acquainted herself with the necessary facts, had selected a commercial school, and insisted that she was going to take English as well as shorthand and typewriting. This struck Evan as being a thoroughly good basis on which to build for the future.

Her took her home in a taxi to what, before the invasion of New York by the "Villagers," would have been counted a queer, poky street, but nowadays is merely termed "artistic."

As they drove up to the door a young man turned at the street corner and came up, looking first at Sara and then at Evan.

"Hello, Max," said Sara. "Meet my friend, Mr. Goodwin." Then to Evan: "This is my adopted brother, Max Rabinoff."

Without speaking, Rabinoff came up to Evan and scrutinized him with a directness of gaze that vaguely irritated Evan and tensed his muscles.

"Vare do you take my sister?" demanded Max.

"I took her to the theater," said Evan, chafing under a feeling of irritation at the suspicion.

Turning to Sara, Max said: "It does no good mixing mit peoples. You should go with your own kind." He turned to go up the stairs.

Evan was beginning to feel angry. "Come back here a minute," he called to Rabinoff, who turned reluctantly and retraced his steps.

"There is no reason why Miss—er—Rabinoff should not go to the theater with me, and there is no excuse for your suspicion."

"That may be right, but all the same no good comes of mixing up peoples—you should leave her alone."

"But you see, I don't intend to leave her alone," said Evan, now thoroughly aroused, and drawing closer to Max. "I intend to see Miss Rabinoff whenever it pleases her to see me; and you can find out who I am without any difficulty."

At this, Sara pressed herself between them and gave Max a gentle push toward the door.

"You should not say those things, Max; it is not polite. The gentleman gives me a position so soon as I can fill it."

"Ya—a position! You got high notions, Sara. You will make yet a tumble."

Quick as a flash she turned on him.

"Enough!" she said imperiously. "The notions I have, the things I do, so long as I make no trouble, are not for you."

Her eyes flashed, and if ever Evan had had any doubts about the definite personality of Sara, they died then. She had poise and manner enough for a duchess. She turned her back on Max, and took Evan's hand.

"I thank you. You have been very kind. Do not call me 'Rabinoff.' My real name is Sara Kosnova, and you should take my address here so that you can write to me if you want me, for I shall no longer be at the restaurant."

Evan gave her his card, on which he scribbled his business address and telephone, and watched her follow Max into the house.

MAX was troubled. The next morning at breakfast he made inquiries, all of which Sara answered placidly, and perhaps a bit proudly. She told Evan's address and his offer, little suspecting the use that Max would make of them.

He took a half-holiday and that afternoon sauntered to the offices of Goodwin & MacNaughton. In the dark of the evening before, he had not seen Evan very clearly, and Evan and Archie were much the same size. Standing at the gate, Max bowed to Archie, who was swinging back and forth at his desk contentedly listening to the squeaks in his chair, and mulling over a case. He looked up just as Max bowed to him, and said, "Come in."

Archie stared at him, vaguely disliking him, and said briefly, "What'll you have?"

"You should leave my sister alone," Max blurted out. "Nothing but troubles come mixing. She's one thing, you're another."

"What the hell are you talking about?" said Archie.

Max placed both hands on the desk and leaned over toward Archie, who rocked back in his chair to keep the distance.

"You should know Sara is a good girl. She gets not into trouble. If you got sense, you keep away."

"Sara!" said Archie. "Sara who?"

With a sweeping gesture Max drew back from the desk.

"You come by the house with my sister last night. That is Sara. She gave me this morning your place. I have not told her that I come here. You should not tell her."

Archie was puzzled. Perplexity showed on his face. Max became angry.

"Enough of this monkey business!" he stormed. "You know what I mean and I know what I mean. You keep away from Seventh Street." Without another word he stalked out of the office.

Archie's composure soon returned but he could not for a long time get any connection in his mind. Suddenly his visit with Evan to the restaurant came back to mind with some association of the name "Sara." "Great snakes!" he said, and then he grinned. Next he scowled.

Evan came in, and Archie looked at him with amazement and respect. Like the good scout he was, however, Archie did not reveal his knowledge. Later in the afternoon he asked casually:

"Whatever became of that waitress friend of yours?"

"Oh, I imagine she's left the place by now," Evan answered with apparent nonchalance, and changed the subject.

Archie was not so sure, and went down to investigate. He couldn't make up his mind whether there was a double meaning to Evan's words or not, but sure enough, there was no Sara in the restaurant. He asked the cashier as he paid his check, "What's become of Sara?"

"She's quit," said the girl.

"Got another job?"

"Na, she's going school. She gets to be one of them stenographers. She's got big notions."

"I'll say!" said Archie, and marched out.

"Seventh Street," he murmured to himself. "Humph!" And he hopped onto a downtown car. He patrolled the street from Tompkins Square to Broadway without success. He thought he might just possibly run into Sara, but unless he could get her address from Evan, he didn't see how he was going to progress.

It may have been the long arm of circumstance, or it may have been mere accident, but instead of meeting Sara, just as he was giving up the search, Archie ran plump into Max. The recognition was simultaneous. Max grunted, and Archie said:

"Aha! Here I am on Seventh Street. Now tell me: is this Sara that you talk to me about, the girl who used to work in the restaurant on Twenty-third Street?"

"You should know," said Max belligerently.

"Why should I know? You come into my office and threaten me. I have never been on Seventh Street before in my life."

"Last night you come by Seventh Street mit Sara."

"Last night I was at Ardsley—thirty miles from here."

Max pointed dramatically at a lamp post. "Before that spot I saw you last night bring Sara home."

Archie turned and walked toward that spot, Max at his elbow. Reaching the position indicated, Archie looked at the house, noted its number, and then looked at Max.

"You think I was here?"

"No monkey business—I know it. Now you come again—that proves it."

ARCHIE laughed. "You'd make a hell of a lawyer, if that's proof to you. You come into my office, tell me to keep away from Seventh Street—that's the one sure way of getting me down here. Now, who is Sara, anyway?"

Max was beginning to be puzzled. The assurance Archie displayed was too much for him.

"Sara—she's my sister. Me, I'm Max Rabinoff. Men come by the restaurant and make eyes on good girls. Good girls don't know; they should leave those men alone. They should stay by their own peoples. You got nothing good for Sara."

"Up to this minute," said Archie, "I haven't had anything at all for Sara, good or bad; but you've got me interested. I'd like to see this sister of yours."

"She's not here. She goes by a business school."

"What's that for?" said Archie.

Max's suspicion flared up again. "She goes by business school, she says, because you give her job in your office. She should be let alone. She makes good money by the restaurant."

"Well," said Archie, "I didn't offer her any job in my office. My partner may have, but if she's a good stenographer, I don't see why she shouldn't work in our office just as well as anywhere else."

"Voik! Voik is another thing. She comes by your office not for voik. You make eyes at her!" Black rage swept over Max's face.

Archie raised his voice. "Once and for all, get this: I don't make eyes at anybody. I feel just as bad about this as you do. My partner's got no more business mixing with her than she has with him. Now do you understand?"

"Your partner," Max repeated stupidly.

"Yes, my partner. Now I want to see this sister of yours and tell her the same thing you've told her. If she's got any sense, she will see that we are right."

Max's face began to clear as he comprehended that he had a supporter instead of an enemy in Archie.

"She comes from the school late. She should be here now. Come by the house in and vait."

It was an ordeal. The pungent odors of exotic cooking, the stuffy room, and the air of strained expectancy made it far from a pleasant enterprise.

Sara arrived after he had been fidgeting on the edge of his chair for ten minutes. She recognized him, but he would never have known her, for, dressed with the utmost good taste in her smooth brown suit with the crisp, freshly laundered waist underneath, the little feathery toque, she no more resembled the Sara of the restaurant than the restaurant did the Astor roof. Archie was not only surprised, he was impressed; and there was a dignity about her that made it difficult for him to tackle his subject.

Max had no such delicacy. "You see, Sara, another man, the partner, he comes to tell you the same. You should not mix."

Archie grinned to himself, realizing the cat was out of the bag. What he did not know was that Sara's level gaze was taking him all in, and finding him to be just the kind of man that she liked to look at; and he represented just the type of individual that she desired to know. She bowed and said:

"I am Sara Kosnova. What do you want to tell me?"

Archie was genuinely impressed.

"Miss Kosnova, I am the partner of Evan Goodwin."

"Yes," said Sara, "I know."

"The deuce you do!" said Archie to himself. Then aloud: "I thought your name was Rabinoff. Your brother came to see me this morning."

"He is not my brother," said Sara, with some slight asperity.

"Oh, well, he said he was your brother. He came to tell me not to pay any further attention to you. He mistook me for my partner."

Sara's brows began to knit. There was a gleam in her eye and Max seemed to shrink slightly from her gaze.

"After you—that is, after the gentleman who calls himself your brother, called on me, I thought it was wise to find out what this was all about, and so I came down here and met him. In the main, Miss Kosnova, I believe I agree with your—oh, dear!—that is, Mr. Rabinoff, on the unwisdom of trying to mix oil and water; but after seeing you, I confess I have—well—"

Sara got the idea. She also had one of her own. Sweeping up to Max with a regal air, she said something very explosive and something very emphatic in a language unknown to Archie. Max was visibly abashed and completely silenced. Turning to Archie, Sara said:

"This is no place to talk. If you would like to talk with me, let us go out and we shall settle matters between ourselves."

As Archie was very nearly strangled by this time, he was delighted with the opportunity of getting into the fresh air. Hailing a taxi, he ushered Sara into it; he bowed ironically to Max, who stood in the doorway, and they drove uptown.

"Will you have dinner with me?" Archie asked.

"I will," said Sara, and he took her to the Claremont.

At dinner, Sara told him the story she had told Evan. Archie liked her looks and her personality but he had no notion of going further than enjoying her society. Evan, on the other hand, did not realize how deeply he was impressed with Sara and mistook a very strong personal feeling for an altruistic interest. Archie had had previous experience with his emotions. Evan had not.

IT IS altogether likely that Sara had made a pretty correct valuation of the ideas of both gentlemen. To Archie she disclosed the fact that Max was no relation whatsoever, but had made love to her for a number of years, wishing her to marry him. She made a little gesture that said more strongly than words that Max should never be her husband. Archie got more and more confidence in her intelligence and discretion and finally, as they were leaving the restaurant, he suggested that for the present, at least, there was no reason for Evan to know they had met. He obtained her telephone number and the address of her business school, and her promise to meet him again the following week.

He took her home, bade her good evening, and went to his club with the feeling that he had done a good day's work.

Began then, a game of hide-and-seek that did great credit to Sara's social instincts and would have raised her considerably in Archie's estimation had he known how cleverly she maneuvered the partners so that one should not meet the other.

It took Sara about four months to master her work, which she no longer called "quick-writing." In fact, in the course of her training she absorbed the English language with facility, wrote it excellently, and spoke it with no trace of accent except a certain daintiness of articulation. Listening to Sara, one knew she was foreign-born because she spoke English so well!

On a sparkling day in autumn she took her place in the offices of Goodwin & MacNaughton, Attorneys and Counselors at Law, dressed effectively and severely in a little brown tailored suit. She had long since decided to "show the ankle" and was now wearing low-cut tan oxfords.

The once reddened hands had vanished; dishes no longer wreaked a terrible phonography on her fingers. Evidently she had also discovered the purpose of the manicure. She chose to appear with the minimum of beauty accessories. It would not be fair to say Sara was beautiful; but she was striking, and the personality that survived the miasma of the restaurant began to take definite form in the attorneys' office.

Evan, because he was anxious not to do anything to prejudice Sara's chances, leaned backward in his formality and impersonality. Archie, because he did not care a whoop whether Sara remained in the office or not, welcomed her with extreme cordiality. Evan had refrained from telling Archie that the Miss Kosnova of the office was also the Sara of the restaurant. Had Evan been slightly more sophisticated, he could not have helped wondering about Archie's lack of curiosity. So there they were: Evan secretly devouring her with his eyes through a glass partition, and Archie, the rascal, making no bones of his pleasure.

Alas! How hard indeed it is for a business woman to keep the emphasis on business! There may be fortunate sisters who are able to maintain an atmosphere of thoroughgoing business in offices, but of these Sara was not one. She was not a coquette in the accepted sense of the word. There was nothing flirtatious or coy about her. She knew well enough that only blondes are successfully coy—she had read the perfume advertisements! But after all, there was a certain dignity and the faintest suspicion of somberness about her that made her exotic.

To the Rabinoffs, no doubt, she was still Sara, but Sara "stuck up"; and many must have been her battles in the home in Seventh Street, for she finally moved out and took her abode in one of those modern nunneries some distance uptown where men are not permitted above the first floor.

THE actions of the Rabinoff family at this point became peculiar. Max, in grotesque finery, followed Sara uptown and tried his most seductive blandishments on her. These failed miserably. Then he became sullen, and was forever meeting Sara when she was escorted by Evan or Archie. He became rough.

Whether it was fate or mere chance, Evan bore the brunt. It was one of those brunts that shake a man and bring unsuspected qualities to the surface. There was no cowardice in Evan; he would have gone to war, or dived into the water to rescue a drowning person, simply and as a matter of training, had he been so called upon, but he shrank from anything suggesting a fuss. He was the least bit too refined; he lacked, apparently, that little salt of roughness and virility that puts its savor in strong men.

One night after the theatre, Max caught the car behind the one Sara and Evan had taken on the way home, and he got off at the same stop. They had no sooner left the bright circle of arc light than Max arrested them with a "Hey!" They stopped.

Max planted himself directly in front of them.

"It is enough," he declared. "I am sick of this monkey business." And he laid a hand on Evan's shoulder.

It was the beginning of Evan's baptism. His mind instantly sensed trouble, and he sought to shield Sara by temporizing. Sara also saw trouble, and sought to shield Evan by tackling Max in his own language. It was without avail. With a blunt ejaculation to Sara, he started pushing Evan back toward the car line. Without resisting, Evan urged Sara to go on to her home, but Sara had no such thought; she intended seeing it through. The situation grew oppressive. Max seemed to be gaining the physical victory, and for the first time Sara committed herself by speaking sharply to Evan.

"Don't let him push you like that," she said. "Hit him!"

It takes but a few seconds for such suggestions to develop, although they seem an eternity to the participants. Evan's powers of wrath had been buried for many, many years. He knew distaste, dislike and discomfort, but anger—shaking, violent anger, was a stranger to him. The pushing had been arousing it, and little by little it was welling up to his consciousness. Sara's words stung him; he detected a suggestion of scorn in them, and reacting almost blindly to a new emotion, he lifted a long right-arm swing which landed directly behind Max's left ear. It broke the hold and stopped the pushing.

"Good!" said Sara, and she smiled a rare smile of delight.

The occasion became extremely confused. Max was no boxer but he was considerably stronger and heavier than Evan, and for the next few minutes he mussed Evan up sadly.

It was wonderful to watch the transformation of Evan. His hat lay on the sidewalk; his collar was crumpled and blackened; his hair was askew; his face was red and his breath was coming in sobs. He was anger incarnate, and he developed an intensity of purpose that overmastered Max's feebler will. It is true that so far as visible damage went, Evan collected the greater number of souvenirs. His lip was slightly cut; his left eye was blackened. However, Max began to think he was fighting a wildcat.

The whole brawl could not have lasted more than two or three minutes, and New York, that strange city of contrasts, provided no spectators except Sara.

Through some mischance Max tripped and fell. Evan kicked him savagely.

"Get up," he said between his sobs. "Get out!"

Max did both, shambling toward Lexington Avenue. Evan dug out a handkerchief and began dabbling his face. Sara took the handkerchief from him and did her best to clean him up, saying:

"You were splendid, magnificent. Oh, I am proud of you!"

Evan's breath still quivered with sobs of anger. His voice was roughened by emotion as he muttered hoarse curses at Max.

The handkerchief, under Sara's guidance, touched a tender and inflamed spot, and he winced with the pain She caught him up in a firm youthful grip and kissed him squarely on the lips.

"I love you for this," she said, and turned and ran swiftly in to her apartment.

NO GREAT change appeared in Evan after his triumph. There was a slight air of proprietorship in his demeanor with Sara—nothing to offend. Sara, the subtle, managed to imply a general attitude of receptivity. It was done with small deft touches rather than avowals.

Archie felt a constantly growing amazement and respect for the girl. His original bantering way, as of one who meets a peculiar situation with a combination of savoir-faire, good breeding, and yet a little spice of toleration, was altering. Somehow, the broad-mindedness originally summoned into action seemed to be less necessary—the situation was growing natural to him. His liking for Sara increased with the number of questions that he could not answer. How could it be that a girl, apparently lacking in good environment, seemed to possess a capacity for composure and poise equal to that of the best representatives of his own class? Why was there no embarrassment? Why no nervous giggles? Why no over-stepping of certain reticences? How could she manage to make him think she was treating him as an equal—or did she "manage"?

He never came to a "Good morning" that he did not boggle over whether he should say, "Sara" or "Miss Kosnova." Once in a while a "Sara" slipped out. Whenever he said it, he acknowledged to himself her perfect right to call him "Archie," but she never did. Neither did she call him, "Mr. MacNaughton." Were he to have entered his mother's breakfast room and greeted a house guest, her "Good morning" response would have sounded the same as Sara's.

Evan, the subjective, was still concerned with himself. While Archie studied Sara, Evan studied Evan. He was a little glad that for years he had schooled himself in repression, for now the turmoil within him was no fit spectacle for the public. It could not be said with utter truth that the Goodwin family had writ its name large in history so that it outshone the Smith or the Jones family, and yet Evan had never been able to dispossess himself of the vestige of the "noblesse oblige" quality that made him slightly ridiculous while it made him wholly admirable. One of his brown eyes might be said constantly to survey the countenances of a long line of ancestors, to discover if they would approve of what he was doing. This interfered with the freedom of his movements. He had come to acknowledge that his regard for Sara was embarrassing. However, he never boggled over his salutation. He said, "Good morning, Sara." It was at such a point that Archie, the sleuth, observed a miracle. Sara's reply in words to Evan was identical with her reply to Archie. To each she said, "Good morning," but Archie saw that to Evan she telepathed an addition and to him it sounded like, "You dear silly thing, when are you going to turn into a man?"

It was a question that Archie echoed. He agreed that, for Evan as well as for himself, the manly and democratic thing to do was to avow the feeling that both felt, and he admitted to himself that he was neither manly nor democratic—yet; but he sought no justification for his failure—he simply admitted it.

Evan did not know that Archie faced the same predicament; he did not know how carelessly Archie disposed of it. Evan wandered through the labyrinth of his memory and the thing he called his conscience and the gallery of his ancestors, disconsolately trying to discover some principle by which he could guide himself.

SARA, meanwhile, typed deeds, briefs, wills and demurrers—if not with enthusiasm, at least with celerity and exactitude. Her well formed head, embraced so smoothly by the purplish black hair, bent itself over her notes or her typewriter and gave no indication of what was going on within.

The greatest craft in the world, however, could not prevent an ultimate collision between her two employers. She was in the act of accepting an invitation from Archie to go to the theater, when Evan offered a similar attraction.

If it was finesse, Archie concluded that it was of such a high order that only extremely capable maneuverers adopted it. She said to Evan:

"Thank you, I am going to the theater with your partner. I will go with you sometime when you ask me first."

It was that very night that Archie was forced to face the results of his action. As they came out of the theater, he was hailed by a happy party of his friends—those luxuriant people who live to laugh.

"Hello, old dog!" said a man. "Come along with us to the Tents of Kedhar." And then he smiled directly into Sara's eyes.

Archie knew he was in for it and accepted, presenting "Miss Kosnova" to the ladies as they assembled in the foyer. Eyebrows that began to rise came quickly back into position. A certain competence in Sara's manner set at rest superficial questionings and started deeper ones. Here was a woman who was not to be snubbed, was the first conclusion, but it was followed soon after by a second conclusion that she was some one who had to be dealt with.

"Are you a New Yorker?" asked one of the husbands as he was dancing with Sara.

"Yes," said Sara, "but I come from Russia."

"Ho! A revolutionary exile, perhaps?"

"No," said Sara, "not revolutionary." And somehow, the gentleman ceased his questions. He told his wife, of course, and she said he was a "poor diplomat."

As they dined, the lady in question tried the attack oblique. She brought the subject around to Petrograd and her visit there before the "Great War." She spoke glowingly of the Nevski Prospekt, and the good old days of the Russian Imperial Ballet. She became involved (oh, so prettily!) as to the exact location of the Hotel Continental, and appealed to Sara for information.

"I do not know," said Sara; "I have never been in Petrograd."

From the other side of the table there came a guffaw that seemed totally unrelated to the discussion at hand. Jove's thunderbolt never struck more resoundingly than did the swift glances of the outraged wife upon her husband. The second guffaw was swallowed with a morsel of bread. One or the other strangled him.

Archie had ceased feeling warm half an hour before, and was enjoying the situation tremendously—after all, nothing could be done to him. And yet—and yet, he ran out of invitations!

Evan frequently took Sara to Carnegie Hall to concerts. His friends were not so gay, but they were just as curious. However, Evan met his test more directly. When they ran into a party of his friends, as they ultimately did, he introduced Miss Kosnova as "my secretary," and the least schooled at omens could see that he furthermore had said, "And I'm prepared to fight about it."

Privately, Sara adjudged Evan's position to be the more admirable of the two. She was perfectly conscious that the two partners were placing themselves in difficult positions. She felt that it was best for them to meet such difficulties early and to make clear to her and themselves what they were going to do about it. In her heart she resented the implication that a stenographer or, as she was euphemistically called, "a secretary" was a little lower than the angels. Yet her good sense told her that resentment would discover no solution to the difficulty. She said as much to Evan one day. Evan had responded:

"My dear girl, there are no class distinctions in the United States. There are distinctions of intelligence and breeding, to be sure."

Sara smiled. Leonardo could have done nothing but applaud the resemblance of her smile to that of "La Gioconda."

"You forget the people with whom I was brought up," she said. "They know the writings of Karl Marx better than you know those in that bookcase." She shrugged her shoulders toward the imposing law library. "All my life I have heard discussions of classes and class consciousness of social strife. I have no class consciousness, so far. I am conscious of those I like and those I dislike. I like honest people"—again she smiled—"and I like hypocrites if they be charming."

Evan winced. He took the war within himself to be hypocrisy. Some days later it overcame him and he blurted it out after hours.

"Sara, I am no hypocrite," he said. "I am torn, and I've simply got to tell you what is the matter, because I cannot keep it to myself any longer. You know how much I think of you."

With a flicker of her eyes, Sara denied it; and yet he continued desperately:

"No woman has ever moved me or touched me the way you have. I look hundreds of women in the eyes, and nothing has happened—but the first day I looked at you I was changed somehow."

"Yes, I know," said Sara.

"I have never gotten over that," said Evan, rather hopelessly; and then he floundered, so that Sara helped him out.

"I see your trouble and I am sorry for it," she said gently. "You see, you are trying to do something you have never done before. So long as you were untouched by life, you thought you were master of yourself, but when life has jostled you, you have lost your balance. When I lived on Seventh Street, I could have contented myself with life there. I could still be a waitress, but I jostled life and I am—I am like you because it would be easy for me to run away, but I have decided I shall *not* run away."

Evan leaned forward hopefully. She smiled and shook her head.

"But I shall not run forward, either. I shall not run—I stand still—" She did not finish the sentence but she made the implication clear.

There followed a period of several months—in fact, all the winter—when neither of the partners invited Sara out. In the office their manner was as usual, but the invitations ceased. Sara said nothing, displayed no resentment, and went on about her work. Then came the spring.

When a man has a car and a seat for a passenger, he can ride where he pleases and meet no one; so the invitations began again both from Archie and from Evan. If there was a slight bulge in her cheek, who can blame Sara for placing her tongue there? Our little Russian was not deceived, and yet she went.

One night Archie threw his arm around her shoulders and pulled Sara toward him. The blue eyes sparkled in the dark. "You like me a little, don't you, Sara?" he said.

"I like you very much," said Sara calmly.

"Oh, well, I mean a little more than that."

"I like you as much as is good for me," said Sara.

"How much is that?" countered Archie.

"Just a little bit less, perhaps, than you are wishing right now."

"Doggone you, anyway," said Archie, and withdrew his arm. "Don't you like to play?"

Sara appeared to consider this.

"I play," she said finally, "after my work is done."

"God 'lmighty!" said Archie, "is this work, too?"

"I have to find myself," said Sara.

"You are just about the wisest girl I've ever met in my life," said Archie, admiringly.

"I have much to learn," said Sara.

"But not from me," said Archie. "You

must have been born with this—" He heaved a sigh. "Oh, Sara! Why the deuce weren't you born up-country somewhere in the United States?"

"God made lots of girls born up-country somewhere in the United States. Why do you not take *them* to ride?"

"That's just the trouble," said Archie. "I suppose I have taken more girls to ride who were born up-country in the United States than any man living; and I suppose, although I ought not to admit it, I have been universally successful with them."

"You are not successful with me?" asked Sara.

"You know it!" said Archie.

"And yet," said Sara out of the darkness in a very soft voice, "if I 'played,' as you call it, like your girls, perhaps I would not be Sara."

"And that's the rest of the trouble," said Archie, starting off up the road at full speed.

EVAN knew of these outings and it was growing on him that he objected to them. Somehow, he couldn't help feeling that Archie was not the right kind of man to go around with Sara! For the first time in his life, Evan realized that Archie was one of those men who are careless about women. Of course he meant no harm, but harm was done too many times by people who did not mean it at all. And Evan tried to discourage Sara from accepting the invitations. This seemed to surprise Sara.

"Mr. MacNaughton is your partner," she said. "Is he not a good man?"

"Oh, yes, he is," said the much torn Evan, "but you have not had experience with the customs—" That sentence didn't get itself finished.

"He puts his arm around me," said Sara very innocently.

Evan gulped. He had been sure of it—now it was true. But he did not succeed in getting Sara to promise not to go out with Archie. It occasioned the first coolness between the partners, for he carried the war to Archie's office.

"Do you really think it's wise to take Sara out on these rides, Archie?" he said as judicially as possible.

"No," said Archie, "it isn't wise. The girl is much too perfect, and she's raising the devil with my heart!"

Evan grew more polite and urbane.

"You are the best judge, of course, of such things, for you have had a great deal of experience; but I wonder if you had thought that she was not so well able to take care of herself as your regular girls."

Archie hardened a little. "You wouldn't go so far as to tell me I mustn't take her out, would you?" he asked.

"Well, I wish you wouldn't," said Evan.

"Oh, well, look here! What is it to you?"

"I feel a little responsible, having brought her into the office, that's all. She might misunderstand your attentions, you know. She might think you were serious."

Archie chuckled a little unpleasantly.

"Any day that girl misunderstands anything, I suggest you tell it to the Supreme Court!"

"But if she did!" persisted Evan.

"It would be no worse than if she misunderstood yours."

"Oh! Well, you know I'm different with women."

Archie got up from his chair rather heatedly. "I don't think I like that statement, and I don't know that I recognize any right— Oh, hell! We're a couple of darn fools, Evan. We have gone along very comfortably for five years with no more than ordinary disagreements, and it's nonsense for us to be scrapping over a Jew girl from Russia, no matter how clever she is. We don't either of us mean anything—we're just fooling around with her."

Evan couldn't unbend, "She's not a 'Jew girl'—" he started.

"She's not?" asked Archie.

"No, she's a Russian."

"Oh, well—a Russian Jew."

"No, *Russian*," persisted Evan.

"Oh, what if she is! If she was a Swede, or a Czech—I don't care if she's Chinese—the fact remains, there's no sense in our quarreling over her."

"But *you* were quarreling," said Evan "I merely—"

"Yes, you 'merely,'" echoed Archie. "The only circumstance under which I see laying off any of the attentions I choose to show her would be your engagement to her. I don't suppose you are prepared to go that far, are you?"

Evan flushed and walked out of the room. He seemed more hurt than huffed.

Half an hour later he was back again. "God help me, Archie—I don't know!"

Archie looked up from a brief. "Don't know what?" He had forgotten the argument.

"Don't know about Sara."

Archie laughed. "That may be, but what's worrying you is, you don't know about yourself. Now come down to earth and face this thing. As far as Sara is concerned, she's capable of going any place you take her, of meeting any society in which you place her. If you were a promising young coal miner, or a farmer, you could marry her and it would be a darn good thing for you; but you're neither promising nor young, and you're in New York where some of our business depends on social convention. I like Sara—damn it, she gets to me!—but I don't think for a minute that I'm ever going to marry her, and you don't really, either." Here he looked intently at Evan. "I suppose you're fussing around trying to take this thing seriously—trying to figure out some way to marry her."

Again Evan flushed.

"Well," continued Archie, "let's fire her. She's all right now and can get another job easily. Let's get this thing off our minds. This comes of having a good-looking girl around the office. What we want is somebody who is neat, clean, reliable and plain."

Evan shook his head dolefully. "Well, *I* couldn't fire her."

"Oh, we won't fire her—we'll get her another job."

BUT they didn't. With a seeming clairvoyance, Sara outguessed them, and a few nights later, she approached Archie, saying:

"Could you easily get another girl for this office?"

"Why, I suppose so," said Archie. "What's the matter?"

"I do not think I care for office work, and if you can get some one, I believe I will be glad."

"What are you going to do, Sara?"

"I do not know yet. I have some plans. But I am all right. I have saved my money—you have paid me well—and I have the advantage of the education you have given me. Yes, I even know a little of the law, and so I thank you."

"Have you spoken to Mr. Goodwin about this?"

"No, I have come to you because I would not have him think I am ungrateful for your much kindness."

So it was arranged, and the "neat, clean, reliable and plain" young woman took the corner and, somehow, robbed it of its interest.

Sara refused invitations to this and that so sweetly and yet so definitely that the boys gave it up as a bad job. Archie closed his book and forgot it; Evan closed his—but turned down a leaf.

It was at this time that Sara felt the greatest tragedy in her life. The man she had chosen had failed her. He made it manifest in many ways that he loved her, but never showed that he loved her more than anything else. Probably, too, it hurt her that she had not been able to use her personality to overcome these limitations of Evan's, for that is always a blow to one's pride, and yet Sara was always strangely free from pride.

At this point many highly emotional women go to the bad. Sara went to a music teacher. To him she said:

"Will you please so kindly listen to my voice, and tell me if I shall be able to sing?"

He was a charming gentleman, with his gray silk gloves. He went to the grand piano and played a chord or two—still with his gray silk gloves!

"Sing so—for me," he said, "do-mi-sol-*do*—do."

And Sara sang, progressing up the keyboard as far as she was able. The music teacher was charmed.

"Splendid, exquisite! You have the quality—you can be a wonderful singer!"

"Yes," said Sara. "How much would it cost to be a wonderful singer?"

"Ah! For a voice like yours, I could do it quickly. You are French—no?"

"I am Russian," said Sara.

"Ah, the wonderful temperament!"

"How much would it cost?" said Sara with her wonderful temperament.

"To you, I would make the price of seven dollars, half-hour, three times a week, and we shall see."

Sara looked at him, unimpressed by his excitement. "I have a good voice, you think?" she asked.

"Oh, but yes—ravishing!" he said a little too covetously.

"I do not believe you," said Sara. "Thank you." And she walked out.

She tried numbers of teachers until she came to a fusty, dusty old man with stubby fingers who did not seem interested in her looks, but in the development of her voice.

He listened judicially, and finally said:

"It may do."

"Ah!" said Sara. "And you charge—how much?"

"Oh—I used to get ten dollars a lesson. I don't know—what can you pay? I'm growing old, and I don't take many pupils. They like Italian, and French and German; they don't care much for crabbed old New Englanders, and so I don't know what to charge you."

"I will pay what you ask," said Sara, "—five dollars, seven dollars, ten dollars. Only you must be honest, like today."

And thus it was. In three months the fusty, dusty, little old fellow had got Sara's voice to a point where it could be heard the full length of the hall, and after the lesson Sara said:

"Now you should know. I shall never be a great singer?"

"No, my dear girl, you won't. You began too late. And you lack the beef; you are not heavy and chunky—you are all nerves. You can be a *good* singer. You might sing in church."

Sara's hands went up a little.

"Did you want to sing in opera, or concert?" he asked.

"No," said Sara. "I don't want to sing anywhere. When I know what I can do then I'm willing to want."

The old man waggled his head in admiration.

"Good girl!" He paused, struck with an idea. "But you have temperament, and a great deal, and you have fire! How is it you are so sensible?"

Sara smiled. "Temperament, I do not know—that is for babies, for rich people. I must know what I *can* do, then I will do it."

SHE finished the music lessons. Then she went to a dancing academy where professional and stage dancing were taught. A slick, greasy little sheik with a cigarette welcomed her effusively. Sara's request was entirely superfluous. She said:

"Please look at me. Can I dance?"

The slick little fellow had done nothing but look at her!

"Sure you can dance—*you* can do anything you want to, girlie. What do you want to do?"

"I would like to dance if I have—you call it the knack?"

"Shucks! Anybody can dance, girlie. The question is, have you got the legs?"

Sara did not wince. "How shall you know?" she said.

"Pull them up," he answered, pointing to the skirts. "Higher!"

She did so, and the slick little fellow seemed entirely delighted.

"You'll do," he said, and started a phonograph. "Can you dance regular dances?" He grabbed her around the waist.

They had circled the room barely three times when Sara stopped, disengaged herself, and gave the slick little fellow a resounding wallop on the side of the head. With some restraint, she said:

"*You* cannot teach me anything."

"Why, you—" he started. But Sara had banged the door after her.

However, Sara planned to learn professional dancing, and so she called at various places until, by dint of elimination, she came upon one that suited her. She was given a "gym" costume, told to don it and appear on the floor when she was ready. A businesslike man put her through a series of calisthenic exercises.

"You will never learn toe dancing," he told her; "you began too late. You can easily do ordinary stage dancing such as is required for chorus work. I can teach you oriental dancing without much difficulty. Is that what you want?"

"Yes," said Sara.

So she spent the next two months and her remaining money, and stopped—not because she was dissatisfied, but because she found it necessary to take up secretarial work again, to replenish her funds.

Midsummer found her again with money, and she began a tour of the theatrical agencies. She discovered a need for professional pictures and was somewhat surprised to learn how little interested producers were in clothes. From the girls she met, she discovered many of the details, and was photographed in a series of poses, calculated best to display her charms. It must be admitted that they were considerable. Sara in street clothes had already demonstrated her charm, but Sara with drapes variously wound around her, displaying beautifully rounded arms, magnificently suave shoulders, was really some one to reckon with.

One day, there was great excitement on the Rialto. Gilligen was putting on a new musical comedy, and wanted people for the chorus. With many others Sara hastened to the stage door on Forty-fourth Street. The place was jammed with women of all ages, all sizes, and all degrees of attractiveness. Every once in a while a surge of the crowd indicated that the stage had gulped another mouthful of people. Sara was admitted with a group of about fifty. The stage was bare with the exception of a table and chair near the footlights, a rickety piano at one side, and at the other a crowd of people, apparently the sheep who had been separated from the goats. Very rapidly, a man sorted the girls out according to their sizes.

"Now, all of you short ones on the left, come up front here."

They stampeded.

"Skirts!" he shouted.

Up they went—and with the coolness and calmness of a man sorting statistics, he began.

"You!" He pointed. "You—and you—and you—and you. All right. Thank you, we won't need you." And he swept the others with a wave of his arm from the stage.

SARA was among the tall ones and surged forward with the crowd. Her skirts went up with the rest, and when the "You—and you—and you" was called, Sara was among those who were to have another chance. The sorting went on until well over two hundred girls were jammed at one side, waiting for the second trial. In succession, he tested groups in dancing and singing, waving off the unsuccessful, weeding and selecting until he had reduced the number to fifty. Sara still remained. Of the fifty, the director seemed to know certain girls and closed with them without further tests. Finally, he looked up.

"How many of you over there have never been on before?"

Not a soul stirred but Sara. She stepped forward.

"How did you get by?" he asked.

Sara smiled.

"Ah, yes!" he said. "Can you sing?"

"Yes," said Sara.

"Is that all?" he said. "Aren't you a concert star or anything?"

"No," said Sara.

"Well, for God's sake! Oh, Jim!" he shouted to the man at the piano. "Here's a girl who says she can sing and lets it go at that! Give her the once-over."

Jim set the stub of his cigarette upright on the woodwork. It balanced perfectly. He ran a scale or two.

"What do you know, kid?" he asked.

"What would you like?" said Sara.

"Oh—any old thing. Do you know 'Roses'?"

"Yes," said Sara.

Jim chuckled. "She's going to sing 'Roses,' Harry!" he shouted.

"If that doesn't kill her, nothing else will," said Harry.

Sara stood by the side of the piano and sang the horrible sentimental ditty to the finish.

A voice from the auditorium was heard for the first time.

"Please come up-stage, miss, and sing something else. Sing 'I Love You.' "

Fortunately Sara had learned the popular songs at the suggestion of the girls she had met along Broadway and knew what was wanted. Again she sang.

From the darkness of the auditorium came another remark.

"Harry, see if she can dance."

"Any old thing, Jim," said Harry, joining Sara up-stage. "Follow me, kid, as best you can."

He went through an impromptu series of chorus steps which Sara watched and duplicated satisfactorily.

"That's all right," said the voice in the auditorium. "Can she do any other kind?"

"Can you?" said Harry.

"Yes," said Sara, and stopped.

"Well, what kind? Speak up—you're with friends."

"I can dance Egyptian, Javanese, Japanese—"

"Oh, that's all right. Jim, some Egyptian music!" And Jim vamped away into an oriental tune.

"Do something with that," said Harry.

And Sara invented a little dance, Jim following and helping materially. He was one of those very adaptable performers who can make or break a girl with their music.

He had taken a shine to Sara, and accordingly with his music led her on to a more elaborate performance. They stopped at a good climax and in perfect time with each other.

"Good stuff!" yelled Harry to the auditorium.

"Damn right!" called back the voice.

"You're all right," said Harry to Sara.

Sara smiled. "Thank you," she said.

Weeks later, when the show opened, Sara had a dancing bit with three other girls, and not only the fat critic of the *Sphere* but the skinny critic of *Pouf* gave her special mention.

ARCHIE discovered her first and said not a word to Evan, but chuckled to himself.

"It's a long day since I've been a stage-door Johnnie, Sara," he said, as she came out after the show, "but for you, I'll do it. Will you have a bite with me?"

"Yes," said Sara, and she told him all about her experiences.

"Have you missed us any?" he asked.

"Yes, I have," she said. "Have you missed me?"

"Well, yes," said Archie. "But you know life in a law office isn't meant to be a pastime."

"That is why I left," said Sara.

"Was that the only reason?"

"No," said Sara.

"What else?" asked Archie.

"Very likely you will never know."

"Humph! Well, I guess you're right. It's none of my business."

"No," said Sara.

Toward the end of the season, Evan made his discovery. He went rather white, but nevertheless, he was at the stage door.

It was characteristic of Sara that she didn't tell him about her evening with Archie, nor did she tell him she had declined other invitations from him.

They lunched and danced. She was very charming to Evan. It seemed as if she had added a litheness to her body that completed what to Evan was the perfect woman. He recalled with some difficulty their first encounter on Twenty-third Street, but as usual Sara outguessed him.

"You are thinking what I used to be," she said. "It was good training—I am strong and vigorous. I was awkward and gawky, but now they have trained it out of me."

"Yes," said Evan, "and your voice is richer."

The poor fellow was full of unexpressed thoughts. He no sooner captured and stifled one than another popped up. A hundred times he was on the verge of an indiscretion but a hundred times he caught himself.

When she said "Good night," Sara sighed a little wistfully. As her head sank into her pillow, she whispered to it. It sounded the least bit impatient.

It turned out that Harry had taken a shine to Sara, and Harry was no other than Mr. Gilligen's right-hand man.

"What are you going to do this summer, Sara?" he said when the show closed.

"I had not thought," said Sara. "Would it be good for me to go into vaudeville?"

"No," said Harry, "keep out of the two-a-day. If you had some nice place in the country to go and stay all summer where you wouldn't be flirting around with a lot of men—"

"Oh, yes!" said Sara. "I know."

"You don't flirt, do you? Well, put it another way: where you won't have to be turning down a lot of men, and where you don't think stage—but just rest—only see to it that you don't get fat! You know fat has ruined more promising youngsters than anything else in this world. And if you come back here the middle of August, I think we can use you somewhere. Leave me your address, or send it to me, anyway. Got any folks? Oh, I forgot, you're Russian, aren't you? Why don't you try to get into a girls' camp for a month? 'Twould do you a lot of good."

WITH canoeing and swimming and tennis, Sara spent six delightful weeks, and came back, brown and healthy, in response to a telegram from Harry.

"You've lost your Russian ways," said Harry after he had talked with her five minutes. "Where's your accent? Where's your shoulders that you used to shrug so? You stride around like an American girl. Great Scott! I hope you haven't spoiled it—we had you cast for a Russian princess!"

"A what?" asked Sara.

"A Russian princess, and I'm afraid you've spilled the beans!" He laughed.

"Can you do an imitation of yourself?"

Up went Sara's shoulders, and into her speech came a slightly peculiar pronunciation of the "r."

"You wish me to be Russian again?" she said, and Harry gave a sigh of relief.

"All right—you can do it! But take a tip from me: America is full of Americans—keep your foreign stuff. They like it."

It turned out to be a fairly good part. She was not a star, but it was more than a "bit," and during the rehearsals of the second act, one of those tricks of fortune descended on Sara. She had an interchange of conversation with the villain. Out in the house, the author and the producer, the adapter and the librettist, surrounded by secretaries, were sweating over changes. The passage was rehearsed several times, and every one was dissatisfied.

"Try it this way," the director had said. They had obeyed; and it didn't work.

"Try it *this* way," said the author, and again they failed.

After each failure there was an intense argument among the producers. Hands were thrown into the air, hair was mussed. Finally the great Gilligen took a hand. Leaning against the orchestra rail, he spoke up to Sara.

"Miss Kosnova! Think of it this way. Remember you're a Russian princess—noble blood and all that sort of thing—and this man makes a proposition that revolts you. What would you do?"

"May I do it my way?" said Sara.

The producer sighed. "Oh, yes!" he said. "Let's see your way—we've had it everybody else's way."

They went back to the beginning of the scene.

"Play it straight," Sara whispered to her partner, and he played it straight. Bit by bit, with the utmost sincerity and earnestness, Sara worked up a tragic climax, playing the whole thing as if it were not a comedy but a drama. When they came to the end of the scene, she clapped a resounding box on the fellow's ear, and swept off the stage like a queen. There was a moment of silence.

"Why, *that's* it!" came a voice from the orchestra.

"By jiminy, it is!" said Gilligen. "Miss Kosnova!" he called, and Sara came to the footlights. "That wasn't what we intended when the script was written, but I guess that's going to heighten the effect of the rest of the scene. Go ahead and play it that way."

It turned out to be a high spot in the show, and another year saw Sara playing serious parts in serious plays. She carried over from musical comedy a lightness of touch and an informality of action that made her work unusual for a tragédienne, and along Broadway it began to be whispered that a new star was rising.

EARLY each season, Evan and Archie had presented themselves and spent an evening with her, and after that, each season, she had declined their invitations. With Archie her manner was one of friendly comradeship. With Evan she was a little cooler.

The year she played "Hedda Gabler" finished Evan. He came to her hotel one afternoon when she had no matinée. She talked with him over the telephone and tried to refuse his invitation to ride with him. Something in his voice touched her and she came down. He took her north into the country. It was Indian summer, and very lovely along the Hudson. Miles away from anywhere, he suddenly stopped the car. His face was white, and so indeed, a little, was Sara's. He turned in his seat and faced her.

"Sara Kosnova," he said, unconsciously adopting the Russian form of address, "I can't stand it any longer. I have loved you ever since I saw you in that restaurant; I loved you in our office—I've loved you always. You told me once I was a hypocrite. I wasn't; I was a coward. I was trying to make sure that I cared more for you than I did for social position. You know what it would have meant for me to marry a waitress. Yes, I'm talking of marriage—I want you to marry me, if you will. You know what it would have meant if I had married my stenographer."

"What will it mean if you marry an actress?"

"Oh, I don't care! I have gotten by caring for anything but you. It may mean just the same thing to marry an actress, but I don't care, Sara. First, my pride gave way. I sac— No, I didn't—it was not a sacrifice; it just crumbled, and then everything else gave way. I don't care any more what happens socially or in a business way. I would be proud to have you for my wife."

Sara seemed to be looking through and past him. His eyes, those bright brown eyes, were clouded and moist, and suddenly he seemed to get a new idea.

"If I had asked you then, Sara, you would not have had to make a sacrifice. Now you are successful, you're known, you must leave your work. Now I come to you and ask you to make a sacrifice, and I'm ashamed." His voice dropped almost to a whisper.

Still Sara said nothing.

"All these years, Sara, I've been saving my money. If Archie feels that I should get out of the business, it will be all right, because I have enough to go on until I get started somewhere else."

Sara's eyes came into focus on him.

"Can you forgive my weakness, my dear?" he continued. "It's an awful thing to say, to tell you—but I have been brought up in a certain way, to live a certain life, to think and believe the things that people all around me think and believe, and it was so strange to come suddenly into a different world."

"Did it jostle you?" asked Sara.

"Yes. You said that once, didn't you? And what else did you say? I know—that then a man found out whether he was in command of himself." He looked deep into her eyes. "Now, I am in command of myself. I have been stupid and slow, but—oh, Sara, I love you!"

Ordinarily Sara's lips were rather firm, in spite of the bow above and the curve below. Now, they trembled a little.

"Do you love me, and can you forgive me?" he said fervently.

A very little "Yes" came from the lips that had made great speeches on Broadway, but it seemed to Evan that this was the greatest speech of all.

"I do not have to forgive you—all I needed was patience. I have waited, and sometimes it has seemed a long time. Sometimes, if I had lifted a little finger, you would have told me you loved me, and many times I have very nearly lifted that finger; but you see, I love you—yes, but more—I thank you. I give you both love and gratitude. You cannot know what it means to look up from the bottom of a hole to see faces and hear voices, but the faces never look at you and the voices never speak to you—you are a machine.

"Do you remember how I was suspicious?" She laughed a little. "I told you I did not want to be a mistress, and you were glad. But you cannot know what it meant to be noticed, to be realized; and when you fought for me with Max, it was wonderful, because you did not want to fight—you were afraid to be conspicuous—but you did it for me. Even in the theater I am a machine—a different kind of machine. I was a work-thing, now I am a play-thing. Only to you, I am a woman."

She threw herself on him, and cried for happiness. Through her tears she looked up and said:

"On the stage when I cry, do you know how I cry? It is because I think of you, and I say to myself, 'He will never ask me.' Then I cry as if my heart would break." Through her tears she smiled, "How can I ever cry again?"

THERE is only one more thing to tell. Sara went with Evan to the Municipal Building to get the license. Said the clerk to Evan:

"What is your name?"

"Evan Goodwin."

"Is that your full name?" asked the clerk.

"No—Evan Arthur Goodwin."

To Sara he turned and said:

"Your full name, please."

Sara replied, "Alisara Anastasia Nicolaievna Kosnova."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the clerk. "And where were you born?"

"In Pskoff, Russia."

"H'm!" said the clerk. "Russian Jewess?"

"No, I am full-blooded Russian."

"What was your father's name?"

"Prince Ivan Nicolaievitch Kosnoff."

"What is that 'Prince' thing," said the clerk, "a name or a title?"

"A title," said Sara.

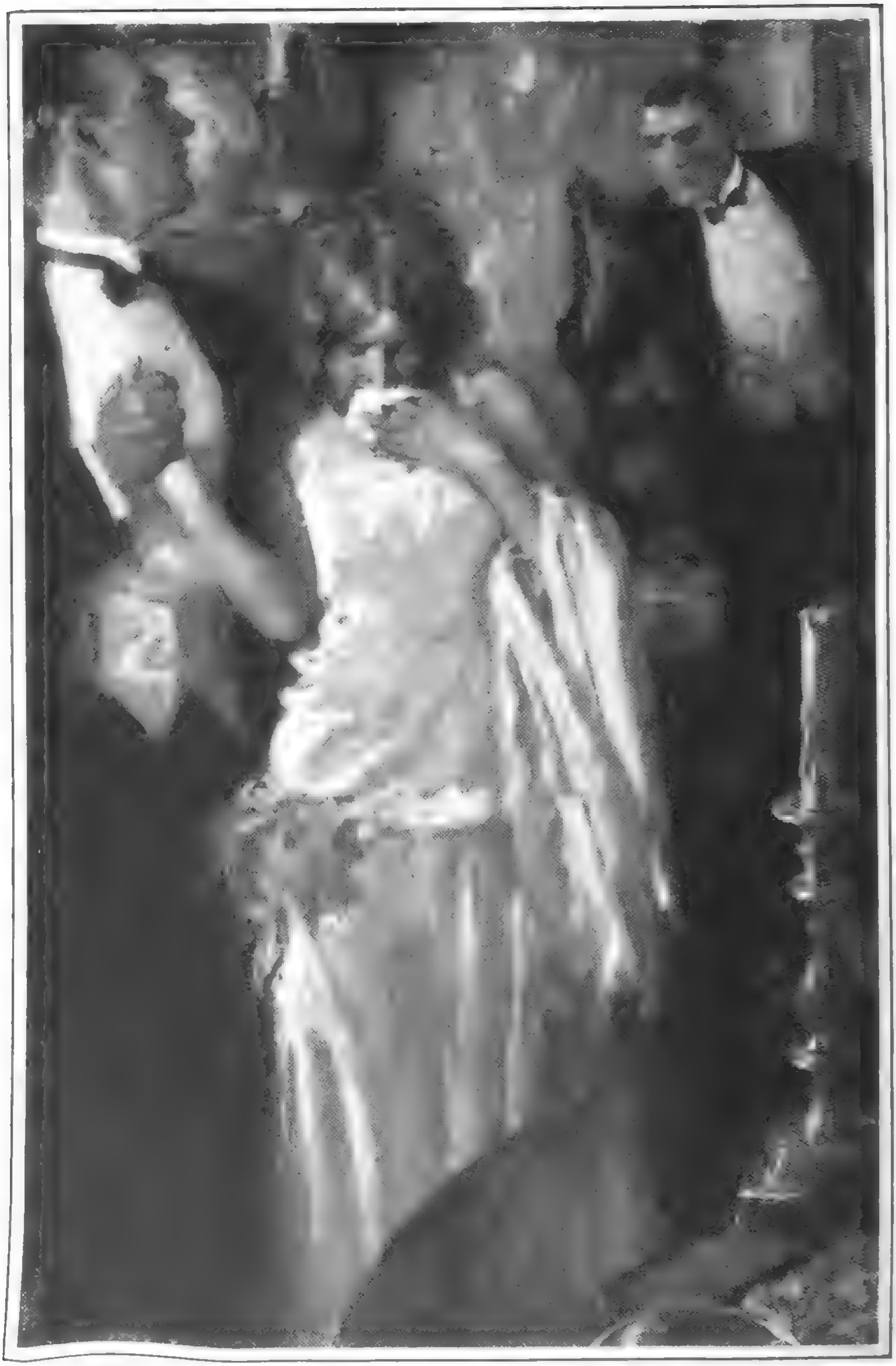
Evan took her hand. "You are a princess?" he said.

"Not since the Revolution," said Sara.

"But you never told me," said Evan.

"You never asked me," said Sara.

But you read all the rest of it in the papers!



"Here's one more thing," Jimmy called out. "Leed Payne was murdered. And I know how it was done—and who did it!"

Was the Millionaire a Suicide?

The Doctor Disagrees

Dr. Farrigan's Prescription of a Course of Detective Stories for Lovesickness Produces a New Brand of Detective and Has Certain Other Embarrassing Results

By Robert A. Simon

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

JIMMY WROME had to punch himself to realize that he was really hearing what he had heard. Here he was, the guest of Leed Payne at that eccentric financier's Bellechester home, Olean. And why? Until yesterday, Jimmy had never so much as seen Payne. He had been brought along to the house party by Payne's physician, Dr. Hugh Farrigan, but he had met Farrigan because—well, because Claire Barton, just when he had been sure she cared for him, as he did for her, had suddenly and unaccountably refused to see him, to talk to him over the telephone, or to answer his letters. The shock of seeing her, plainly on terms of intimacy, with young Blake Hesbe had brought on an attack of nerves.

He had gone to Farrigan—and confided in him. And Farrigan had prescribed diversion—specifically, a course of detective novels. They had cured him, too—made him, to be sure, an amateur detective in doing so. And he had come to Olean, to find Claire Barton one of the guests, and Hesbe another!

The night before, Payne, suddenly taken ill, had insisted that his guests go to Shuffle Inn, where Eddie Endle, one of the queerly assorted party, was the star saxophone player. A telephone call had brought Dr. Farrigan back. Jimmy, oddly disturbed, had followed him—to be sent curtly to bed. And now—the odd man who was his only companion at a late breakfast had just told him that Payne had shot and killed himself during the night!

Jimmy gripped his knees. His premonitions had been true—too true.

"I'm the coroner," added the stranger grimly.

Jimmy caught a smile before it broke out. Here was he, specialist in mysteries and violent deaths, sleeping through a dramatic suicide, and being informed of it condescendingly by a local official. Things were like that. He had been looking about for something of this order and when it happened almost under his nose, he was unaware of it.

"Dr. Farrigan called me this morning," explained the coroner. "I thought all the guests had gone on the ten o'clock train. Don't blame them, either. I don't see any holiday in staying in a house with a body."

"Everybody gone?"

Jimmy almost echoed the coroner's remarks.

"Dr. Farrigan is still here, sir," explained Stelke, "and Miss Barton and Mr. Hesbe."

Jimmy's waning interest in breakfast disappeared entirely. Why had Claire and Hesbe remained? Depend on it, this was no ordinary suicide. His intuition had told him that a catastrophe was impending at this party. It told him now that there might well be something more than suicide involved.

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"Doctor—"

"Miles. Miles is my name."

"Dr. Miles," Jimmy said. "I don't want to butt in where it's none of my business, but could I see the body?"

"You're certainly different from the rest," commented Miles. "They all wanted to get away as quick as they could."

"When did this happen?"

"About midnight. Stelke heard the shot and rushed to Mr. Payne's room. The door was locked. He phoned for Dr. Farrigan, and they broke in the door. It was all very obvious."

The coroner seemed to be almost bored with the case.

"Well, may I see the body?" persisted Jimmy.

"I was going now. I came early, without breakfast. Dr. Farrigan had me fixed up—but if you want to look, come along."

He led Jimmy to Payne's room. The door was partly open, and Hugh was sitting within.

"THIS young man wants to look at the body, doctor," explained Miles.

Hugh stared at Jimmy in amusement. "Going to uncover a great mystery here?" he asked ironically.

Jimmy wouldn't answer. He waited for Miles to remove a sheet from the body on the bed. Payne had died in his nightclothes. The shot had been fired through his right temple. The face was almost expressionless. The bedding evidently had been changed and the body had been composed.

Miles pointed to a revolver on the table near the bed.

"It was still in his hand when they found him," he observed.

"Mind if I look at it?"

Hugh and Miles exchanged glances.

"Go as far as you like."

Jimmy balanced the weapon in his hand. It was an ordinary enough thirty-two-caliber affair, apparently little used, and it bore Payne's initials.

"Is Payne's watch here?" asked Jimmy.

"Trying to hitch a robbery to this?" queried Hugh. "Everything's here. We examined the room while you were still asleep."

Miles laughed at the taunt.

"I didn't expect to find it missing," retorted Jimmy. "Please let me see it."

Hugh extracted it from Payne's bureau drawer and handed it to Jimmy, who glanced at it casually and returned it.

"Thanks. Did Payne shave himself?"

"He used a gun—not a razor," said Hugh.

"I'd like to see his razor, anyhow," insisted Jimmy.

Stelke brought it from the bathroom. Jimmy looked at it, nodded, and handed it back.

"The doors and windows were locked, I take it," he went on. "They always are. Nobody could have got in and out again without leaving traces."

"That's detective-story talk, Dr. Miles," laughed Hugh. "Mr. Wrome is a patient of mine. I recommended detective stories to him to take his mind off his troubles and this is the result."

"Everything was locked. And if you have any doubt about the suicide, Mr. Wrome, look at this."

Miles handed him a square sheet of paper. Jimmy read the message on it:

> There is no use going on. It is better to end it all.

"You've identified this as Payne's writing?"

"Certainly," said Miles, with a little asperity. "It's a regrettable but ordinary case."

"Is your conclusion that Payne met death by his own hand?" inquired Jimmy.

"Absolutely."

The coroner made it plain that he saw no point in wasting more of a beautiful Sunday over the matter.

"You're the boss," said Jimmy dubiously, "but I think we might—"

Here Stelke left the room, explaining that he had heard the front doorbell.

"Do you mean the butler shot him?" asked Miles.

"No."

The butler hadn't shot him. Of course, if Stelke should turn out to be a man whom Payne had swindled in business many years ago, it might be different. But the butler always was the first and obvious suspect; Jimmy refused to consider the contingency.

The coroner, however, didn't accept Jimmy's positive negative.

"You know, doctor," he said, turning to Hugh, "come to think of it, that man could have killed him, fixed it up to look like a suicide and then sent for you to throw off suspicion."

"Does he look or act like a murderer?" asked Hugh.

"No-o. I shouldn't say so. It doesn't look like a murder, anyhow." He turned to Jimmy. "You've been putting all this stuff into my head," he announced.

Jimmy grinned, as Stelke returned.

"There's a reporter here," he said.

"How do the papers happen to know anything about it?" wondered the coroner.

"At least three guests have left since the affair," said Jimmy, "and I dare say that the servants know what has happened."

"Hell!" complained Miles. "I'll never get away now. Well, I'll go down and see him."

JIMMY followed the coroner into the den, where Stelke had stored the reporter, a sturdy, sunburned young man, patently pleased with his assignment.

"My name's Heidelman," said the reporter. "I'm from the Bellechester *Chronicle*."

"My God!" stormed Miles. "I thought you were from a regular paper."

"This is a beat," said Heidelman, who had read several works on practical journalism.

"Well, I know old man Cane and all the rest down at the *Chronicle*," continued the coroner, "but I never saw you before."

"I'm just working there for the summer—for experience," explained Heidelman. "I heard about Payne's death at the station and I thought I'd come right up."

"Nothing to say," snapped Miles. "Tell Cane to ring me up tomorrow—not today—if he wants to talk to me."

"But the readers of—"

"That's all I've got to say now. I'll make my report tomorrow."

He brushed by Heidelman to the door.

"I've lost enough time as it is!" he exclaimed, as he hurried to his car.

Heidelman turned to Jimmy, who was raiding the cigarette box.

"Maybe you could tell me something," he suggested.

"Sit down," said Jimmy.

"This would be a scoop for me," said Heidelman. "I'm taking a correspondence course in journalism and people like to kid me about it. Well, I heard one of those hangers-on down at the station tell another that Payne had been found dead and all his guests had left suddenly. If I could rush that story to old Cane before the police or anybody gets it, it would certainly hit him between the eyes. So I'll be awfully obliged for anything you can tell me."

"Did anybody tell you it was a case for the police?" asked Jimmy.

"Why, no! Isn't it?"

"The coroner doesn't think so. That isn't his official statement, but he took it for a plain case of suicide."

Jimmy outlined the events leading up to the arrival of Miles.

". . . so when a man is found dead, with a revolver in his hand, a farewell note on the table, and all doors and windows locked, there's only one conclusion," he finished.

Something in Jimmy's voice prompted Heidelman to investigate further.

"And is that your conclusion, Mr. Wrome?" he asked.

"Who am I to have a conclusion?" retorted Jimmy. "I was a guest over the week-end. I was with the others at Shuffle Inn when it happened."

"But you have something more to say," persisted Heidelman.

"Why don't you interview Dr. Farrigan or Miss Barton or Mr. Hesbe?" countered Jimmy. "I believe they're still on the premises."

"Sure will," agreed Heidelman, with alacrity.

Jimmy rang for Stelke, who entered silently.

"Will you ask Dr. Farrigan whether he has anything to say to a reporter?" he said. "And you might ask Miss Barton and Mr. Hesbe to step in here for a moment, if you find them."

"Could I ask him—"

Jimmy shunted off Heidelman's attempt to interview Stelke.

"He's greatly distressed over Mr. Payne's death," he explained. "Don't harrow his feelings unnecessarily."

Jimmy toyed with the cigarettes in the box.

"I don't want to be quoted," he went on, "but there are a few things connected with this affair that could stand a little further inquiry. In the detective stories, it's often the reporter who solves the mystery."

"Is there a mystery?"

"I didn't say so."

Jimmy enjoyed Heidelman's perplexity. Perhaps for the first time in his life he was a fountain-head of knowledge for an anxious seeker after information, and the sensation was distinctly agreeable.

Stelke returned with the tidings that Hugh refused to be interviewed, and that Miss Barton and Mr. Hesbe would be there directly.

"Do you think they'll be able to give me any more?" inquired the reporter.

"Maybe they won't want to," murmured Jimmy.

THAT was a meaningless remark but it aroused Heidelman's curiosity visibly. Jimmy smoked quietly until Claire and Hesbe came to the den. Claire was more ravishing than ever. She seemed depressed by the tragedy, but Claire depressed was more glorious than any one else elated. Hesbe, as always, appeared insignificant.

"What'd you want us for?" demanded Hesbe.

"This," explained Jimmy, "is Mr. Heidelman, representing the Bellechester *Chronicle*. He has heard of Mr. Payne's death. Will you tell him anything you know—or think?"

Jimmy watched the effect of his rather airy speech on Claire. She seemed to grow pale, to become more disturbed. Claire was somehow connected with Payne's death. He wasn't so sure about Hesbe, but there was a something between Claire and Payne—a something, he was sure, which had disrupted his friendship with her.

Hesbe's gaze shifted about the room.

"I don't see that there's anything for me to say," he answered. "No. I don't know any more about it than anybody else."

"And you, Miss Barton?"

Heidelman's suavity delighted Jimmy. However, it silenced Claire.

"No."

Even the one syllable, spoken almost unintelligibly, stirred Jimmy. If only he could summon together enough courage to face Claire frankly, to tell her what was in his heart, to put an end to a situation which maddened him!

"I don't think there's much there," he remarked to Heidelman. "I've told you who was here, when it happened, and so on. Dr. Miles will have some sort of statement tomorrow. I don't know what else—"

He stopped and looked sharply at Claire and Hesbe, who were listening.

"This isn't anything authoritative, Mr. Heidelman," he went on deliberately, "and I'm offering it to you only as a suggestion which might occur to me if I were a reporter."

Claire and Hesbe, he noted, were all ears.

"If there were any more to the case—and it probably will develop that there isn't—than the suicide of a wealthy banker, recently not in the best of health, I should look into the gun which caused his death. It would be interesting, in any event, to know whether he had bought it in the last few days especially for this purpose or whether he was in the habit of sleeping with a gun under his pillow."

Hesbe sneered. Claire's face became taut.

"Look here, Jimmy Wrome," she cried. "Do you think you're a detective? Why—" She calmed suddenly. "We might as well go, Blake," she remarked coolly to her escort.

Jimmy followed her. "Claire," he pleaded, "I only want to—"

"Don't talk to me—I don't ever want to hear your voice again!"

Something was frozen inside Jimmy. He stood dumbly in the room. He put out his hands pleadingly.

"One more thing," Claire went on. "Don't go out of your way to make a bigger fool of yourself than you have already."

Jimmy's hands were cold. He felt perspiration on his forehead. His tongue went dry, and there was a chilling sensation in his chest. And then he found his voice.

"Then here's one *more* thing," he called out. "And I'll bet anything I have or ever hope to have on it. Leed Payne was murdered, if ever a man was murdered. Not only that, but I know how it was done—and I know who did it!"

He dropped limply into a chair. He was exhausted. Heidelman came to him solicitously.

"Don't bother," murmured Jimmy weakly. "I'll be all right in a few minutes. Just leave me alone. That's all—now."

IN EVERY detective story, Jimmy had learned, there comes a stage at which the local sleuth appears on the scene. The local sleuth usually is attached to the police department. He is a hard-working, arrogant, thick-headed constable, serviceable only as a foil for the quick-witted hero. His calculations and conclusions point to the guilt of the very person whom the hero least wishes to implicate. But at the last moment, Bernard Gartlin, or your own favorite, turns the tables with the finesse of a spirit medium.

With the publication of Heidelman's flowery narrative in the *Chronicle*, the cue for the local detective had been given. The district attorney, whose life for the last two years had been clouded by unsolved shootings of notorious citizens, sighed wearily as Heidelman's story was called to his attention. It wasn't, strictly speaking, called to his attention. He read it himself, but he always liked to mention that his attention had been called. Kenworthy hated shootings which were open and aboveboard. Whenever one of those things took place, his opponents would call his attention to the fact that he was very harsh with minor law-breakers but that he was powerless in really important criminal events. Why hadn't Miles told him about the Payne shooting? If Heidelman's story were correct, there was a case for the grand jury. If it were wrong, there would be a clamor for the trial of some one, anyhow.

"I don't know any more about it than you do," protested Miles, in answer to an irate call. "As far as I could see, the man had shot himself and that was all there was to it. I didn't know anything more about it until I saw that crazy yarn. Who's this Wrome, anyhow? He hung around, hinting at things, but he looked like a crank to me."

"That's all very good, Miles," retorted Kenworthy; "but look at the evidence the paper scraped up. Wrome gives the impression that Payne didn't do it. You know people are always ready to believe it's a murder."

"I don't see any evidence," said Miles. "He is mysterious about the gun."

"I'll grant that," said the exasperated district attorney, "but the whole thing's so cleverly done that the whole county'll be after me if I don't start something. Why didn't you choke this Wrome off?"

"Hell! I didn't think he'd spill all this bunk to a reporter," shouted Miles. "He didn't tell me anything about it."

"Well, are you going to call it suicide?" demanded Kenworthy.

"How can I? It'll have to be death at the hands of persons unknown. I can't take a chance now any more than you can."

The district attorney hung up angrily. He shoved the papers about his desk aimlessly for a few minutes. Then he called up Edgar Brinze.

Brinze was the son of old man Brinze, of Hardell, Brinze and Coblin, cement manufacturers. Old man Brinze was reputed to be the richest man in the county and high in the councils of the governing party. Edgar had somehow made his way through Harvard, but had shown an alarming ineptitude for the niceties of the cement business, so old man Brinze decided to have him enter public life. Edgar thereupon was created a captain in the Bellechester Police Reserve Force. The police were not enthusiastic, for Edgar insisted on acting as unofficial head of the two-man detective department. Kenworthy, for obvious political reasons, however, found Edgar a useful ally, and employed him as a confidential investigator.

"Get this man Wrome out here," he told him. "Go over the case with him. Make him dish up anything he's got. And put him out of the running. I don't want another one of these insoluble shootings on my hands."

SO THE local detective entered Jimmy's life. Jimmy discovered that this stout, amiably condescending, red-haired young man didn't match the picture of Bernard Gartlin's adversaries in the interest of Justice. Brinze had the confidence of a rich man's son. Otherwise, he wasn't exceptionally objectionable, although Jimmy didn't like his way of calling him "old man."

"Did the *Chronicle* quote you right?" asked Brinze, after introducing himself.

"I didn't intend to be quoted at all," said Jimmy. "The reporter is an amateur and doesn't know enough to conceal the source of his information. I merely offered a few confidential hints, and he printed some of them. But his story is substantially correct. Why, by the way, should a little sheet like the *Chronicle* worry you?"

"It doesn't. But all the New York papers have reporters hanging around now. If the *Chronicle* hadn't printed all that stuff, they'd have let it go at suicide. Now, what

I want to get at is this: were you just talking in the air, or did you really have something up your sleeve?"

"Neither. I simply said it would pay to find out about the gun."

Brinze drew the revolver from his desk.

"Here it is," he said. "It looks like any ordinary .32 and it has Payne's initials on it."

"What do you think of the engraving of the initials? Does it look like a good job?"

Brinze examined the initials with a magnifying glass.

"It looks a little cheap," he said.

"Exactly. Now, Dr. Miles will tell you that I asked for Payne's watch and razor. Both of them were engraved. The style was entirely different. That's not so important. But the initials were J. L. P. Payne's whole name was John Leed Payne, and he seems to have liked the monogram, although he didn't retain his first name for any other purpose. I noticed that the silverware and the glasses at tea were monogrammed with three letters."

"What are you getting at?"

"That I don't believe this was Payne's pistol."

"But he had it in his hand when they found him."

"Suppose you ask that butler, Stelke, whether Payne owned a revolver. He would know."

Brinze sent for Stelke.

"If anybody had anything to do with this—in a criminal way—it would be Stelke," he observed. "There wasn't anybody else around who could have done it."

"I don't say that the criminal was in the room at the time of the shooting."

Brinze stared at Jimmy.

"That's nonsense. The doors and windows were closed. The powder marks and everything about the wound indicated that Payne could have been shot only when the muzzle was right up against his temple. He couldn't have been shot from the door, and the windows were locked. And he couldn't have been shot from the windows, even if they had been open."

"I don't say he was."

Brinze's expression showed that he doubted Jimmy's mental balance.

"Come down to cases," he urged. "If Stelke didn't do it, who did?"

"I'd have to prove any accusation I made, wouldn't I?"

"Of course."

"Such being the case, that's all I can say now. I haven't anything more than an opinion, and it might be wrong. I've given you my best lead—the revolver. It's up to you to track it down."

Jimmy lit a cigarette and smiled enigmatically. Brinze glared at him dully.

"I think you're just cooking this thing up," he declared. "I don't know why, and I don't care. But I'll tell you this much: You've started something you can't finish. I'll prove either that Payne killed himself or that Stelke did it."

"You'll have a hot time proving either. By the way, how long ago did you quit wearing your college frat pin, if that isn't too personal a question?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Not a thing. I was wondering whether I was right in supposing that you had worn it up to a short time ago."

"I haven't worn it since—" Brinze flushed a little.

"I didn't mean to ask whether you'd given it to a young woman," laughed Jimmy. "But if you'll look at your shirt, you will see that there are two little holes which only some piece of jewelry like a frat pin could have put there. The shirt is a new design, so the holes must be fairly recent."

Brinze laughed sheepishly.

"That's rather clever," he conceded.

He inspected Jimmy as if to retaliate with a deduction of his own. But none was forthcoming.

BRINZE'S emissary brought in the frightened Stelke. Jimmy was interested in Stelke at this moment. Never before, to his knowledge, had he seen a butler in street clothes. He recalled the fascination with which he had watched a waiter in a chop house slide out of his white apron and coat into a neat blue jacket and march out jauntily, lighting an expensive-looking cigar. The waiter had passed from a polite servitor into a self-satisfied spectator of the human comedy. Stelke, likewise, seemed a stolid, indifferent, middle-aged man, his civilian speech diverging sharply from his meticulous diction in his customary part.

"Don't be afraid of us, Stelke," said Brinze. "We're trying to clean up this thing as quickly as possible and you seem to be the only person who was at hand when it happened. Just tell us what took place, as you remember it."

Stelke repeated the familiar sequence of events. He had heard the shot. He had found the door locked. He thought of sending for Dr. Farrigan. Yes, the fear that he might be suspected of a crime prompted him to send for the doctor before opening the door.

"You had some questions, Mr. Wrome?"

"Stelke," Jimmie began impressively, "did Mr. Payne own a revolver?"

Stelke appeared perplexed. "Not that I know of," he answered. "At least, he never had one in his rooms, and I used to see that everything had been done properly there every day. If he kept one, I never saw it."

"Did he have one anywhere in the house?"

"No. I'd have known of it if he had."

"Did you ever see this revolver before?" He pointed to the weapon on the desk.

"Only—only that night."

The hesitation in Stelke's answer was from horror rather than from grief, Jimmy felt.

"You see," Jimmy remarked to Brinze, "I thought that this gun would bear a little investigating."

"But couldn't Payne have bought it specially for this purpose?" Brinze smiled condescendingly.

"That's possible, but I doubt it. Stelke—did any one enter the room after Mr. Payne went to bed?"

"Not that I know of. I'm pretty sure nobody did. Dr. Farrigan and I helped him to bed and then he ordered us to get out. I heard him turn the key in the door after us."

"My guess," observed Jimmy, "is that Payne didn't have that revolver on him when he went to bed. Of course, he might have concealed it somewhere and gone out to get it later. Perhaps, Stelke, you'll tell us whether Mr. Payne could have left his room unobserved after he retired."

"No, sir. I was worried about him, and I stayed down in the hall until about midnight. He said I was to wait up for the guests, anyhow. If he'd made any move I'd have heard him. About seven, I think it was, I went up, knocked at the door and asked him if he wanted anything. He told me to go to hell, so I figured he was feeling better."

Jimmy smiled at Brinze. "Do you grant me the question of the revolver?" he asked.

"Well, there may be something in it. But I didn't send for you to do tricks. I want to know what reason you had for calling Mr. Payne's death a murder. Are you through with Stelke?" Brinze brandished a paper cutter menacingly.

"Quite."

Brinze rapped against the desk indecisively.

"I haven't anything more to ask you now, Stelke," he announced. "You can go—but don't leave town until I tell you you can."

STELKE, who had regained his wavering self-possession, hesitated.

"Do you mind if I say something?" he asked.

Brinze shook his head. "Go ahead," he said.

"It's this," explained Stelke. "You get me down here and you ask me what happened and I tell you and then you begin asking me a lot of questions about the gun and all that. Now, as sure as my name's Herman Stelke, Mr. Payne did away with himself. God only knows why, but he did, sure as you or me stands here. But if you still think somebody else did it, you're going about it wrong, all wrong. You'll pardon me for saying so, Mr. Brinze and Mr. Wrome, but you know what this reminds me of? The movies. It's like a detective story in the movies, with people looking for footprints and all that. If I was in your place and I thought anybody'd shot Mr. Payne, I wouldn't waste my time that way. No, sir! You know what I'd do? I'd look for the woman." He paused, extremely satisfied with his address.

Brinze declined to degrade himself by commenting.

"Very interesting, Stelke," acquiesced Jimmy. "But which woman?"

"How should I know?" retorted Stelke. "I'm no detective. Mr. Payne knew lots of women, but I couldn't say any one of them had any reason for shooting him. All I say is, where there's so much smoke, there must be a woman."

Brinze glared at the butler. "You have some one in mind, Stelke," he said. "I want to know her name."

Stelke smiled at Brinze's melodramatic assertion. "I have not," he declared. "I didn't mean for you to think there was a woman in it. I only meant if there was anything to it, it was a woman. That's all."

Stelke's "That's all," a weak echo of Payne's famous ultimatum, amused Jimmy.

"That's all, Stelke," he said. "Mr. Brinze, I don't think Stelke has anything more to offer."

"I'm not so sure of that."

Brinze frowned at the butler, who was not at all nonplused.

"But you can go, Stelke," he added, "and don't forget—you're not to leave town without reporting to me."

"Very good," replied Stelke. "I've got business here to finish up anyhow. Good night."

BRINZE waited until Stelke had disappeared. He closed the door solemnly and stalked back to his desk.

"I'm getting tired of this," he said. "What else have you got up your sleeve?"

"I haven't anything up my sleeve," protested Jimmy. "It's merely my idea that Payne didn't meet a voluntary death. And it's not my business to follow the case. Of course, you can drop the affair here, if you like. But I imagine that you'd try to solve it, or at least investigate it yourself, rather than have it done by the newspapers."

Brinze's hostility abated. The mask of the official dropped and he became a fairly pleasant but annoyed young man.

"You're right about the papers," he assented mournfully. "I don't know why the hell you had to get us into this. If there's one thing the New York papers like, it's to kid Kenworthy and the police. We can't afford to have another mystery hanging over us. You're sure you haven't got anything more?"

"Sure. But—"

Jimmy stopped. He had been about to make a facetious reference to Stelke's suggestion about the women when he recalled the enigma of Claire's relations with Payne. What if Claire were somehow implicated? He felt uncomfortable. His nervousness began to manifest itself. Brinze, he feared, saw that.

"But—"

Brinze paced about the room. "There *is* something else," he said. "There's a woman—a woman you know. Payne was pretty wild with them. I know. I'm going to question every woman at that house party."

"Why," remonstrated Jimmy, "would it have to be one of the women at this particular party? You say Payne knew any number of them."

"It wouldn't have to be," answered Brinze scornfully; "but I'll look them over first anyhow." He sat down for cerebration. "Let's see," he mused. "There was Mrs. Gulvin and that blonde—what's her name?"

Jimmy resented the description of Claire. He felt himself growing red in the face.

"Mrs. Gulvin," Brinze went on airily, "doesn't figure in this."

Jimmy became very preoccupied with his match.

"She's happily married—at least, I think so. She's a weak sort and anyhow Payne wasn't interested in her. I never could see why he had her around unless it was because he wanted something from Gulvin. We'll rule her out. Now the blonde—"

The blonde seemed to be a diverting fancy.

"Well, we don't know much about her. Miles saw her and he says she sure had the looks. She looked kind of sad, too, he said. That's interesting."

Jimmy looked at his watch.

"Well, I wish you luck," he said dispiritedly. "I ought to be getting back to town. You know where to get me if you want me. But I'd look into that gun first."

"Chairchez le femm," laughed Brinze. "If there's anything in this, I've got it. It's the amateurs that look at guns and engraving. Motives are what we need—motives. Good night!"

JIMMY was miserable on the way back. The cool night breeze made him shudder. Or wasn't it the breeze? Why did he shudder? Why should he perspire so on a cool night? He clenched his hands in the vain hope of steadying himself. A horrible mess he had made of it! What a fool he had been to talk his head off to Heidelman! Brinze would persecute Claire and he might find—almost anything.

The more he muttered, the more he reflected, the worse he felt. He staggered through the lurching train for a drink of water. He staggered back to the smoking-car, hoping to find solace in cigarettes. The aroma of cheap cigars sickened him. He went to the platform and breathed deeply. It was very quiet in these indistinguishable villages. The little lights in distant cottages were so peaceful! The inhabitants weren't worried about futile love affairs and murder trials. He could be riding here tranquilly tonight, admiring the loveliness of the starlit fields and the little houses, if he weren't a plain damn fool. He lit a cigarette and watched the match die out as he tossed it from the train.

"That's how my happiness went," he chattered. "A little spark—and darkness. You're getting sentimental now. Don't. But what's the use? What does anything matter?"

His soliloquy went on as the train rattled into sight of the lights of New York. He returned to the car. Perhaps this mood would wear off. Perhaps it was all a bad dream. At the station he took a taxi. The ride was cooling. He paid the driver and entered his flat without looking about. No use. He couldn't go to sleep. He couldn't be alone with his thoughts.

Across the street he could see a lamp burning in Hugh's office. Hugh could give him something to relieve him. Hugh, in a deep blue dressing-gown, answered his ring.

"Well, what's wrong with you now?" he demanded.

Jimmy blinked at him. "Sorry to disturb you," he began, wearily.

"You're not disturbing me. I've been reading. I didn't expect company this time of night, though. Come in. Sit down."

Jimmy slumped into a chair. "Same trouble," he grunted.

"I thought I'd cured you of that," said Hugh good-naturedly. He took Jimmy's hand. "You seem a little upset."

His voice was calming and the steady gaze of his eyes was reassuring.

"It's not love—this time," said Jimmy. His voice wouldn't yield to him.

"Let's hear the story," suggested Hugh. "Get it off your chest."

"I was called to Bellechester. I told Brinze—that's the detective—about some crazy notions I had. And he—Lord—he's going after Claire! '*Cherchez la femme!*' he says."

Hugh lit his pipe and stared at Jimmy deliberately. Jimmy felt exhausted.

"Let me tell you something," said Hugh, at length. "I don't know any more about your early history than you've told me. But I take it that your life has been rather a simple one until the past few weeks."

Jimmy nodded impatiently.

"You've had an even way," continued Hugh, "and a relatively slight disturbance has impressed you tremendously."

"Slight disturbance!" Jimmy cried out bitterly. "It's no slight disturbance to see the girl you love accused of murder!"

"Now, hold on," counseled Hugh soothingly. "You don't get my point. And anyhow, she isn't accused of murder."

"Don't quibble," groaned Jimmy.

Hugh pulled a foot rest from under an easy-chair and placed a pillow on the back.

"Sit here," he said. "It'll help you relax. And listen to me before you work yourself up again."

Jimmy dropped wearily into the seat of comfort.

"THIS is what I'm driving at," Hugh went on. "You never had any serious emotional experiences. You became attached—more so than you suspected—to Miss Barton. The course of true love ran according to form. It ran off the track. And the effect was a jar to your nervous system. Not a very deep jar, although you won't agree with me now, but a comparatively heavy one for a man whose emotions weren't hardened to a blow."

Hugh smiled.

"This is something for Dr. Villmers, the psycho-analyst. I'm only an orthopedist."

Jimmy resented the reference to the psycho-analyst. He wanted a remedy, not a talk about his hidden emotional mechanism.

"I've read up all his stuff about complexes and repressions and all the rest of it," he said querulously. "I haven't any suppressed desires or phobias or inhibitions or any of the rest of them. And if I have, it doesn't matter. This isn't a clinical case, doctor. I just want you to give me something to quiet me. I know what I've done, and tomorrow I'll just notify the office that I'm called away on urgent personal business and get at the bottom of it."

"Of what?"

"Of this murder."

"Why," demanded Hugh, "do you insist on making a murder of it?"

"I wish to God he *had* killed himself," said Jimmy, "but I saw a few suspicious things and I couldn't shut up about them. I never thought they'd lead to—where they have led."

"From what I've heard about your clues," Hugh remarked, "they're too vague to convict anybody of anything. You've started a little stir, but that won't last. The case'll drop out of sight before you know it. Don't worry about it. You're highly susceptible to suggestion, especially now, when you aren't altogether sure of yourself. Any suggestion takes hold of you and masters you. There are plenty like you. Give them an idea and it grows, often with amazing rapidity, into something like a hallucination. Forget all this. Go to work again tomorrow and help reduce the price of sugar. That's the best cure I can give you."

"But Brinze insists—"

"You insist, not Brinze. You have an idea that Brinze is determined to hurry Miss Barton to the electric chair. You're the only one who has it. You've taken up a chance remark and magnified it into an indictment. Suggestibility—that's all. That's what ails most of us."

Jimmy pulled himself up in his chair suddenly. He felt no less agitated, but something seemed to become clear in his mind. Hugh went to a cupboard and brought back a small bottle of white pills.

"Two or three of these in hot water will help you sleep," he said, "but an end of brooding will be more effective. Forget it. That doesn't sound professional, but it's an excellent prescription."

Jimmy stood up. He was breathing more freely. He was weak, but a mist seemed to have been dispelled.

"Thank you, doctor," he said, "I'll try to do what you say. I think you've shown me the way out."

"It's the only way out," remarked Hugh, escorting Jimmy to the door.

"Where did Payne come from?" asked Jimmy irrelevantly.

"Oh, forget Payne! As long as you continued to harp on the things connected with the week-end, you'll be miserable."

"But where did he come from?" Jimmy's eyes glistened eagerly.

"Charleston, South Carolina. Now that you know that, maybe you'll be able to sleep without the pills."

"Thank you, doctor. I'm going out of town tomorrow. I can get away, all right. Maybe the change of scene will do me good."

"Change of thought is enough. You can brood out of town just as well as in this office or in your apartment."

"No—I'll have to go. The answer may be down there."

"Where?"

"Charleston."

SURE enough, Jimmy went to Charleston. He made his first tentative inquiries about Payne at the hotel; the clerk called over one Hickman, a reporter, and introduced Jimmy to him.

"If Hickman doesn't know, no one does," he said.

Hickman did vaguely remember Payne and knew, he said, a man who would remember a good deal about him—old man Ormer, out in Boone Valley. A great gardener, Hickman said—he lived about twenty miles out of town; had lost a lot of money a few years before. And—Hickman began to remember—hadn't Payne shot a man, once? Or maybe a man had shot him.

Jimmy's brown eyes snapped as he hurried through the tranquil boulevards of Charleston to find a train to Boone Valley. Payne had shot a man, had he! Or a man had shot Payne. This might be the turning-point.

Ormer's house, which was white in name only, was of a piece with the drab surroundings. Two shaggy trees, with dead branches dipping down, threw a shade over the front of it. A battered screen door was partly ajar. A sallow board had been nailed across a broken windowpane.

Jimmy walked through a decaying wooden gate which had long since ceased to function and traveled over the traces of what had once been a path to the house. He felt strangely cool in this sultry patch of land. Involuntarily he adjusted his bright cravat as he pushed the rusty doorbell. He could hear no sound within, nor was there any symptom of life in the house. He followed a line of scattered gravel—had this

Suddenly Jimmy lost all interest in the fare. The man driving the taxi was none other than his shadow!

once been a walk?—to the rear of the house, where he saw an old man puttering about a tiny garden, in which a few feeble blooms sprouted anemically.

"Mr. Ormer?" inquired Jimmy.

Mr. Ormer looked up with a start. He was tall, flabby and stoop-shouldered, and his face was one which looked as if its owner always blinked. Ormer had long white hair and he was as clean-shaven as a three days' growth of bristles would permit him to appear. His teeth were yellow from tobacco, and his small blue eyes were watery. He nodded by way of identification.

"I'm from the New York *Times*," Jimmy began jauntily. "Could I interview you?"

The word "interview" brightened up the dull visage of Ormer.

"Certainly, sir. Won't you come into the house and sit down?"

A latent courtesy was breaking through the old man's apparent diffidence. Ormer seemed like a man unused to speaking.

Jimmy followed him to the cottage. It was even smaller inside than he had suspected. Ormer led him into a little parlor. A table covered with a soiled green cloth and a few unstable chairs covered with frayed blue plush, furnished it.

"Sit down, sir," requested Ormer, whose speech was growing easier. "What would you like to know?"

"About your flowers now—"

What questions could one ask about flowers?

But the suggestion had touched the hidden springs and words gushed forth freely and eloquently. Jimmy wondered what all this talk about peonies and roses and heliotrope and violets and salpiglossis might mean. He nodded as intelligently as possible at every pause. Finally Ormer fished a crumpled clipping from his baggy gray trousers and thrust it at Jimmy. It was a short item from some local newspaper about Clayton Ormer's flowers. Jimmy stared at it with a show of intense interest and returned it.

"This is fine!" he exclaimed. "Just what I wanted. I'm more than obliged to you!"

"I can tell you much more, sir," said Ormer, whose voice had acquired a certain power. "The riches of nature are my hobby and flowers are my children."

"How long have you lived here?" asked Jimmy, trying to switch gradually to the subject of Payne.

"Upward of twenty years, sir."

"You come from Charleston?"

"Born and bred there, sir. Are you from New York, did I understand you to say?"

"Yes, I'm from New York."

How to bring up Payne?

"I knew a man who used to know you, I believe, Mr. Ormer."

ORMER'S face clouded, but Jimmy was determined to drive for his point.

"He came from Charleston originally," he went on glibly. "His name was Payne. He—died a little while ago."

"Payne? Jack Payne?"

So Payne was Jack Payne in his day.

"That's the man."

"And he said he knew me, sir?"

Jimmy nodded.

"And he's dead?"

The news of Payne's death silenced Ormer for a moment. He opened the drawer of the table and drew out an old corn-cob pipe.

"You'll pardon me, sir?"

Jimmy produced a cigarette by way of answer.

"So Payne's dead," ruminated Ormer. "Died in his bed, I dare say."

"In his bed," said Jimmy truthfully. "Did you—did you think he might meet any other sort of end?"

He waited eagerly as Ormer scratched a match against his boot and lighted the pipe. As Ormer puffed away, Jimmy could almost hear his neglected mental machinery begin to operate again. Finally Ormer looked up.

"That's very interesting news, sir," he remarked. "Was he a friend of yours?"

"Just an acquaintance."

"Ah, yes! Very successful, I suppose."

"Very."

"I thought as much. He might have been a big man in Charleston, if—"

"Go on!"

Jimmy almost commanded the old man to tell his story.

"Well, sir," began Ormer, settling down comfortably to his pipe and his narrative, "in the old days, Jack Payne worked for me. That was before I—retired."

Ormer was covering up his failure loftily, Jimmy thought.

The old man bent over the table, apparently focusing his ideas on the green cloth before him.

"Like to hear about Jack, sir?" he inquired.

"By all means, if it isn't troubling you."

"No trouble at all, sir," smiled Ormer. "It does me good to talk over some things."

He shoved his pipe into his mouth as if to secure it and settled back for his story.

"My memory isn't what it used to be," he began. "I can recall faces and events but details slip. However, Jack Payne came to work for me when he was a young fellow. He was a right smart, handsome boy and I thought some day he might succeed me."

Ormer became melancholy.

"That was when I was making money, sir," he explained in a peculiarly humble way. "Later on, my ventures didn't turn out as well as I might have expected, and—But that has nothing to do with Jack Payne. You'll pardon me, sir, if I wander. Payne made good progress with me. I started him as a clerk in my office—I was a broker, sir—and soon he became my right-hand man. I don't say he wasn't always honest, but he gambled—gambled more than a young man in his position had a right to. He played the races heavily and he speculated. I forbade him to speculate, but I knew he did it behind my back. Speculation isn't good for any man, sir. It brings financial ruin to some and misfortune to all.

"But Jack was known as a lucky gambler. He never lost on the races and his speculations were uncanny. He seemed to have no system like other speculators. He operated entirely on his intuition. He used to say that he could feel the movement of a security and he never was very far from wrong. Some little thing would give him the idea that a stock would rise and his money would be in it. Impulse governed his life. It almost amounted to superstition, sir. A chance remark by a nigger boy would somehow be his cue to buy a certain stock.

"You know, sir, that a successful gambler makes enemies. Payne was a sharp trader and many men hated him. They envied his luck and his successful intuition."

"You mean that he worked on hunches?" asked Jimmy.

"Hunches, I believe, they call them now, sir. Yes, you might say that he worked on hunches. As I was saying, Payne played a lone hand. He had no close friends. I trusted him in a business way, but I never had his confidence. What he did outside of office hours was not my business. I should have liked to have been a friend to him, but he was cold and independent.

"Now and then they tried to break him in the market, but they never got him. And if he suspected that any man was trying to thwart him, Payne would go to any length to defeat that man. He never failed. Sometimes it took him several years to even an account, but he always evened it—and more."

Ormer paused to relight his pipe.

"As it was in money matters, so it was with women. Jack was a hot-blooded boy, no more so perhaps than many others of his time, but he couldn't stay away from women. He was involved in several ugly affairs and once I cautioned him as gently as I could. I told him that many a good man had come to grief through women. He laughed at me and walked out of the office with his head high. He was a very proud young man. But in the end I was right. It was because of a woman that he left Charleston."

Ormer's dull face had become animated by memories, and he went on fluently.

"THERE were still duels in those days. We didn't say much about them, and they were fought across the bay on the island. Many a good man died at dawn, with the river mists rising like a soul on its way to heaven. That was my fancy then. Even now, when I see the mist on the bay—

"You'll pardon me, sir. I'm getting away from Jack again.

"Jack fell in love with a woman named—I can't recall her name. It was twenty-five years ago if it was a day. It was something like Nagle, and she came from a small town near by."

"Nagle?" interrupted Jimmy. "Are you sure it was Nagle?"

"I'm sorry, sir," apologized Ormer. "Nagle is the name as I remember it, and yet it wasn't Nagle. Her name doesn't matter."

Jimmy wanted to insist that the name mattered enormously, but he saw that it was futile to press the matter.

"I never saw her. I heard about her. She was a simple girl, they said, beautiful and innocent. She had come to Charleston to spend the summer with kin. Jack fell in love with her, and when I heard of it I was happy, for I thought he might turn over a new leaf if he married her.

"But there was another man—a man from up North. And one week-end, when Jack had gone off with a few companions who were merrier than they were wise, the man from the North and the woman Jack loved went away and were married.

"When Jack returned from his debauch—it's the only word, sir—he was like a wild man. He drank incessantly for a day, and went through the city with a gun in his pocket, looking for the man who had taken away the woman he loved. He swore he would kill him.

"He found the man late at night. He made him go with him to a saloon, saying that he wanted to celebrate with him his great fortune in winning so wonderful a woman. Jack was so insistent that the man went along to humor him.

"In the saloon, Jack called all the men—and it was a meeting-place for the gay bloods of the city—together. He mounted a table and made a speech. He pointed out the young husband as the man who had been tricked into marriage. And he sneered at the man, saying that he had known this woman intimately long before her husband had held her in his arms. It was a vile accusation and the husband leaped to the defense of his wife's good name.

"There was a disgraceful scene—Jack lost all control of himself, and fired several shots at the other. The police came in, but Jack disappeared through a side door. His friends, wouldn't give him away. But Jack Payne was never seen again in Charleston.

"That was the last I knew of him until you told me of his death."

Ormer shook his head regretfully. He had an affection for Payne or for Payne's memory.

"You never heard of him again?"

Jimmy prompted the old man in the hope of learning something of Payne's subsequent movements.

"Never—except once."

Ormer smiled humbly as he ran his hand through his white hair.

"I forget so much, sir. I've had reasons for trying not to remember things. But I did hear of Jack once after he left. He wrote me a short note from New York. It was written on the train, I think, and it wasn't signed, but I should have known his hand anywhere. He said he had to leave, that he was sorry he couldn't say good-by, and he ended up by saying that he would even up matters with the man who had ruined his life."

"What was his name?"

"I don't know that, sir."

Ormer's manner was again defensive. He seemed to be sensitive about his failure to recollect details.

"But it isn't my memory that's at fault this time," he went on, with a touch of pride. "I never knew the man's name. He was a stranger in town. Payne didn't use the name in his letter. He referred to him with a vile expression. He said he'd even matters with him if it took twenty years. I wonder if he did."

Jimmy would have given anything to know the answer to the implied question.

He lit another cigarette and rose to go.

"But about my flowers," began Ormer. "I was going to tell you more, sir."

"You've told me just what I wanted to know," said Jimmy. "I don't want to take up any more of your time."

"Not at all, sir." Ormer had risen with his guest. "I could talk all day about my flowers. They are all I have left. You'll send me a copy of your article, sir?" Ormer's eyes were wistful.

Jimmy felt guilty. But perhaps he could get some newspaper man—possibly Heidelman—to print a few lines about the old man of Boone Valley.

"I'll be delighted to."

JIMMY gripped Ormer's dry hand and went on his way, murmuring meaningless thanks. As he walked down the hot road to his rented vehicle he was trying to fit Ormer's story into the evidence already at hand.

Jimmy arrived in New York in a state of mental breathlessness. He had to tell some one his discoveries. Hugh would be the man to hear about it. Hugh had been skeptical of the value of the Charleston trip, and he certainly would be surprised to hear what it had yielded.

"Been in Charleston?" asked Hugh.

"I have," asserted Jimmy.

"Bring back the murderer with you?"

"No, but . . ."

Jimmy retailed Ormer's short history of Payne's career.

Hugh regarded him quietly as he finished.

"My boy," he admonished, "go back to work. I don't pretend to be a sleuth. I don't know anything about the fine art of crime detection. But all that I can see in this lurid tale of yours is an episode in the life of a man who probably went through more than one such experience. Still, I don't say it was a fool's errand. The change of air seems to have done you good."

"Oh, you don't understand and don't want to understand," retorted Jimmy.

"Probably I don't. As I say, it's out of my field. And let me give you a little sound medical advice. Now that you've worked off all this emotional energy, resume your regular way of living and forget the rest. You're a little late, anyhow."

Late! Jimmy felt himself tingling.

"Well—how am I late?"

"There's been a coroner's inquest, finding death at the hands of persons unknown. Payne's will has been offered for probate. He left almost everything to institutions. And there's been an arrest in the case. You may credit yourself with it indirectly, for if you hadn't got this man Brinze excited, the whole affair would have passed over by now."

"Yes—but who—who is it?"

Hugh smiled tantalizingly.

"Gulvin," he said. "They found him searching Payne's room two nights ago. You see," added Hugh, "while you were hunting ghosts in the sunny South, the practical detective managed to get down to cases."

Jimmy surprised Hugh by his high spirits on hearing of the arrest of Gulvin.

"COULDN'T be better," Jimmy laughed. "Of course, he would land on Gulvin."

"Why 'of course'?" demanded Hugh. "There's no 'of course' about it. Gulvin, as I told you, was found rummaging around Payne's rooms."

"What was he looking for?"

"I don't know anything about that. Brinze declined to tell the papers anything more, and I don't know that he would have told them about Gulvin's arrest if Gulvin hadn't beaten him to it."

"Where is Gulvin? In the county jail?"

"If that's where they keep them, that's where Gulvin is."

"He won't be there long."

Hugh pointed his pipe ironically at Jimmy.

"I suppose you'll release him and substitute the real criminal," he mocked.

"No; that's storybook stuff," retorted Jimmy quizzically.

"Your attempts are more storybookish than anything I ever heard of," countered Hugh.

"It depends which book you use." Jimmy gazed thoughtfully out of the window. "There's one point you might help me to clear up, doctor," he remarked. "I've been persecuting Brinze with Payne's revolver. To your knowledge, did he ever own one?"

"How should I know that?" demanded Hugh. "He must have had one, to shoot himself with it!"

"You still believe it was suicide?"

"Yes, I do, and anybody not obsessed with crime-hunting or persecuted by crime-hunters would have the same opinion." He smiled benignly. "It's none of my business," he went on, "to tell you what you ought to be doing except in a medical way, but, as man to man, don't you think you're wasting a lot of time?"

"No, I don't!" Jimmy jumped up from his chair. "And I'll prove it to you yet," he added, as he went rather abruptly out of the office.

The next move wasn't altogether apparent. The arrest of Gulvin was to have been expected, Jimmy thought. Gulvin had an alibi. He was several miles away at the time that the shooting took place, and there were plenty of witnesses. Why he had searched Payne's room wasn't explicable at this moment, but Jimmy had a notion. "Chairchez le femm," as Brinze put it. It would be a simple matter to exonerate Gulvin if Gulvin couldn't extricate himself from the enforced hospitality of the county jail. He put Gulvin out of his mind.

Tonight he would interview a more important witness.

First he ran through the mail on his desk. A plain envelope with a badly typewritten address interested him. A small folded sheet, also typewritten, fluttered from the envelope:

> EVERYBODY IS LAUGHING AT YOUR DETECTIVE STUNTS. YOU'D BETTER DROP THEM, OR IT WILL BE THE WORSE FOR YOU.
>
> ONE WHO KNOWS.

Jimmy gaped at the note. For a moment it startled him. This might easily be a practical joke. He locked up the note and its envelope in his little strong box. Nothing could be done about it now, at any rate.

He smoothed out his evening clothes and prepared to go to Shuffle Inn. Eddie Endle, at least, didn't know that he was following the Payne affair, and he might know something about Payne's entanglements. It would be necessary to examine more thoroughly all the guests at the party. Brinze was saving him the trouble of questioning Gulvin, but Gulvin was of no significance in the matter.

He went into the street in search of a taxi. As usual, there was none in sight. He started for Broadway. It occurred to him that he had dressed too rapidly and he stopped to adjust his tie, using a window as a mirror. He noticed a man across the street stopping to stare at him. It was a tall, thin, shabby figure with a dirty Panama hat pulled far over the face. Jimmy turned around sharply to inspect the man, who averted his head as Jimmy faced in his direction and slumped nonchalantly down the street.

Turning the corner, Jimmy looked back and perceived that the man was following him.

Shadowed?

The melodramatic thought came to him and wouldn't down. He walked a few blocks, passing several inviting taxis. Then he wheeled about. His shadow was still with him. First the note, and now a shadow. The pursuer was becoming the pursued.

THE persistence of the seedy figure increased Jimmy's interest in his quest. It was only meet that the detective should be stalked by an unknown adversary. He was tempted to whirl about, grasp the shadow, rip off the Panama and demand to know his business.

"Now, in the stories," he reflected, "they don't do that. It would end the story prematurely. But I'll take a whack at this manikin and see what he means—if anything."

He performed a correct military about face and marched briskly and directly to the shadow. The shadow, at Jimmy's approach, faltered and suddenly ran for a Broadway car. He boarded the red vehicle as Jimmy tried to follow him and the car went uptown.

"I ought to hail, as they say, a taxi," Jimmy muttered, "follow the car, and grab him when he gets off. But," he added out loud, "to hell with him!"

And now the long, long trail went winding to Bellechester again and from Bellechester across the glazed roads that led not to Olean but to Shuffle Inn. It was early for the restaurant, and only a few respectable patrons hauled one another across the floor as Eddie's orchestra tootled plaintively boisterous melodies into the empty cuddle corners of the institution.

Jimmy took a table near the band and perfunctorily ordered an orangeade. Two dollars, he thought, was enough to spend in this hostel. He sat facing Eddie and looking fascinatedly at the curious gyrations which accompanied Eddie's performance. The rhythm apparently seized Eddie and tormented him, forcing him to sway back and forth as it impinged on various parts of his body. Eddie's shining saxophone indicated the tempo for his assistants and sparkled like a Gargantuan firefly through the artificial dusk of Shuffle Inn. Jimmy's eyes followed the magnetic horn. Suddenly his gaze became intense and he concentrated on the lower side of the instrument. He almost stood on his head in his efforts to examine one certain spot. The waiters were a little uneasy about his contortions, for few patrons of Shuffle Inn stood on their heads before midnight.

The scattered handclaps didn't encourage Eddie's entourage to respond with an encore, and Eddie left the platform. Jimmy greeted him cordially.

"Why—hello!"

Eddie seemed a trifle surprised to see Jimmy.

"Haven't seen you since he died," he remarked lamely.

"Too bad, wasn't it?" commented Jimmy.

"A shame."

Eddie's superlatives were not the strongest.

"You know," he went on, "I was sort o' shocked when I saw you just then. Last time you was here was the time he died, and seein' you there sort o' brought it all back if you know what I mean."

They sat at a little table back of the palms about the podium.

"I see some of 'em says he didn't do it himself," observed Eddie, by way of making pleasant conversation.

"What do you think?"

Jimmy's eyes were unnecessarily severe and his jaw was needlessly squared as he fired this question.

"HOW'M I to know anything about it?" asked Eddie naïvely. "I don't see why a man who's got everything he wants and then some wants to go off and end it all; and then again maybe there was something none of us knows nothin' about. It's too deep for me. I don't make it."

"Did you ever hear him speak of—suicide?"

Eddie wrinkled his brow. "Can't say I did. No, he was cheerful enough, I guess. Of course, his bum shoulder sort o' made him cranky sometimes, but I never heard him say nothin' about wantin' to end it."

"Suppose—now I'm just asking this as a hypothetical question—"

"A what?" Eddie hated highbrows.

"Let's just pretend," Jimmy said, "that Payne was afraid of some one."

"Aw, he wasn't afraid of nobody!" scoffed Eddie. "He had guts!"

"Yes—but mightn't he have had some enemy who wanted to see him out of the way?"

"We all got guys who don't like us," philosophized Eddie.

"But if it were a row over a woman," Jimmy continued.

"If you're talkin' about me," said Eddie, "I don't get in no rows over women; I get in rows *with* 'em. If you're talkin' about Payne, he didn't have to have no rows. When he wanted 'em he got 'em. He had technique."

Eddie was proud of his imported two-syllable word.

"By the way," Jimmy remarked, glancing at the platform, "what kind of saxophone are you using tonight?"

"That's an E flat," explained Eddie. "I like it for straight stuff. Later on you'll hear a baby sax that'll make you feel lovin' as hell, but this old bird's a good reliable old horse."

Jimmy craved an inspection of Pegasus, the bird-horse. Eddie put the instrument in his hands.

"Now, if you're anything like the rest o' the customers," he said, "you'll ask me if it's hard to play and I'll tell you it is. Funny thing—every man you meet wants to play a sax. If that's on your mind, lay off it. It's an overcrowded profession. Lots more money for beginners in tubas, specially if you double on the bull fiddle."

"I wasn't looking for a new vocation," explained Jimmy.

He ran his fingers over a monogram on the lower side of the horn.

"I see you have it initialed."

"I'll say I have! People are so crazy about saxes they steal so many you can't hardly get insurance on 'em."

"Where did you have this monogram put on?"

"I've got that on all my saxes—all nine of 'em."

"Where did you say you had them monogrammed?"

"Down at Wicker's. That's in Maiden Lane. I get a lot o' jew'lry off him and he done this as a favor. If you want to get some good-lookin' rocks, that's a fine place to get 'em. Ask for a lanky guy named Hough. Tell him you're a friend o' mine and he'll sure treat you right."

"I'll do that."

Jimmy fretted. At least a part of his solution lay at Wicker's—possibly in the hands of the attenuated Hough—and he would have to wait until morning to pursue his inquiries.

"Give 'em a fox," remarked Eddie, rising. "Dead crowd this time o' night. Waitin' for somebody?"

"No—I'm alone."

"Pickin's ain't so good this early. Wait till round eleven and I'll tip you off to a hot bimbo."

Jimmy smiled at Eddie's imputations.

"No—I'll be taking an early train back," he answered. "I was feeling a little blue tonight, and I like to hear you play."

While Eddie's cohorts were declaiming lyrically the virtues of somebody's eyes, Jimmy slipped out of Shuffle Inn and went over the roads that led to New York. He thought that he might doze on the train but Eddie's identification of Wicker's as the jewelry shop in which his instrument had been embellished had induced an excitement which precluded slumber.

"Brinze is out of luck," he ruminated, as the train clattered along. "What hunch was it that led me to Shuffle Inn tonight? Endle's monogram and Payne's were the work of the same hand. Now, if Wicker's can tell me who had that revolver initialed—"

Nothing could be done about it until morning—and yet the initials on the revolver wouldn't go from his mind. He brooded over the possibilities of the monogram until the train reached the Grand Central Station. Still mulling over the problem, he stepped into a taxi and went riding up Fifth Avenue.

A jarring stop interrupted his meditations. He saw the driver step from his seat and raise the hood of the machine. The delay made Jimmy fretful. He hated to be held up en route anywhere. Impatiently he lit a cigarette and resumed his contemplation of events past and revelations to come.

Finally the taxi jerked on its way through Central Park, and deposited Jimmy at his door.

He tried to read the meter, but the light was poor.

"How much?" he asked the driver.

The man lit a match and held it before the clock.

And then Jimmy lost all interest in the fare. The man driving the taxi was none other than his shadow!

THE shadow, whoever he might be, was an expert in the art of concealing his features, and his appearance on the driver's seat of the taxi was a triumph of ubiquity. Shadows usually turned out to be villains in disguise. (See "The Pumblewaite Legacy.") Sometimes they were helpful detectives ready to intercept the powerful malefactor. (See "The Rosenbaum Case.") That this long slender figure was a detective was improbable, and that it was a really well-equipped villain was unlikely.

The doorman told Jimmy that he was to call Mr. Brinze at Bellechester as soon as he came in.

"Well, I'm glad I can lay hands on you," exclaimed the voice of Brinze, "even at this hour. We're getting down to brass tacks now, and as you started this business, you might as well be in on the finish."

Jimmy noted the exultant tone of the local detective. It convinced him that the finish was not so near as Brinze imagined.

"Going to hang Danny Deever or Gulvin or somebody?" he inquired.

"Don't be a fool!" Brinze's voice cracked angrily. "All I've got to say to you now," the detective continued, "is that I know all I want to know, and I'm going to have an informal examination tomorrow morning at ten. I want everybody who was a guest at the party in my office at that hour, and that means you, too."

"Very good of you to invite me."

"Don't try to be so damn funny!" Brinze was in the worst of humor. "I might as well tell you now that we'll have the newspaper men in on this," he went on, "and I'll show them what's what."

"*What's* what?"

"You'll know all about that in the morning!"

Jimmy could picture Brinze slamming the receiver on the hook viciously. He smiled as he went to bed and woke up the next morning with a keen appetite for the proceedings. He looked out of the window for his shadow. The shadow was eating a late breakfast, apparently. He wasn't there.

As Jimmy scrutinized the menu at the dairy restaurant around the corner, one of the shadow's stratagems became clear. The shadow hadn't been the driver who had started from Grand Central. When the alleged breakdown occurred, the shadow had replaced the chauffeur.

"I wonder," Jimmy confided to his eggs, "whether he thought of that himself or whether he read it somewhere and tried it out."

The eggs were silent.

Brinze's inquisition was a grim echo of the animated party which Payne had arranged. Gulvin had the conventional pallor which results from incarceration, even in the county jail. Mrs. Gulvin wept gushily. Claire looked solemn, beautiful and unhappy. Hesbe still appeared to be the recipient of the double blank when the dominoes of life were distributed. Eddie was Eddie. And Hugh sat about calmly, but obviously anxious to get back to more interesting duties.

Brinze seated himself behind his desk, and rapped for attention. Heidelman and three blasé real reporters sat at a table which Brinze had reserved for the press.

"FIRST of all," began Brinze, "I want to say that this is unofficial. I admit that the proceeding is unusual, but we're not going to get anywhere with cut and dried methods. The only thing that interests me is to get to the bottom of this business. I want the facts. And I intend to get them.

"I don't expect anybody to say anything which might tend to incriminate or degrade them. I'm not going to put anybody under oath. But I'm after the facts, and I'm going to get them or know the reason why!

"All that passes here, gentlemen of the press, must be regarded as confidential. I'm willing to take the newspapers into my confidence, but I don't want a word of this printed until I say so. Is that clear?"

He glowered at the four reporters.

"It's clear," growled a stout reporter, "but what the hell use is all this?"

Brinze was palpably shocked, but expressed his contempt only by a withering shake of his head.

"Mr. Gulvin!"

Gulvin rose in his place. He was white and he rubbed his fingers nervously.

"Now, Mr. Gulvin," Brinze began, "do you admit that you visited Mr. Payne's rooms since his death?"

Gulvin gulped and nodded.

"Very good."

"What's very good about that?" interrupted Jimmy.

"I'll show you in a minute!"

Brinze brought his fist down on the desk, injured it against the edge and sucked his hand most unmagisterially.

"I'm conducting this examination," he snapped. "Any one who has questions to ask may do so at the proper time."

"You were searching Payne's rooms," he continued. "Now, Mr. Gulvin, just what did you expect to find there?"

"I refuse to answer that," declared Gulvin. "I object to these proceedings."

"Maybe you'd prefer to answer to the examining magistrate," sneered Brinze.

"I certainly would!"

"Sit down!"

Brinze shut off Gulvin's examination with as much drama as he could command.

"Mrs. Gulvin!" he bellowed.

His manner now became oleaginous.

"Mrs. Gulvin," he smirked, "you don't want to see your husband prosecuted, do you? Will you tell us what you know about your husband's relations with Payne?"

"DON'T you answer!" cried Gulvin.

"I won't!" confirmed his wife lachrymosely.

Jimmy rose. "Mr. Brinze," he said, "I'm confident that I can clear up this angle of the case if you'll let me ask Mrs. Gulvin a few questions."

"I'm conducting this—"

"Let him ask them!" growled the fat reporter.

The press backed him up with assenting grunts.

Brinze spread his hands on the desk helplessly.

"Go ahead," he said grudgingly. "If it brings us any nearer the truth—" His resignation was magnificent.

"Mrs. Gulvin," Jimmy began, "you were interested in the Molecule Theater, or the Atom Theater, or some such enterprise?"

"Indeed, yes," she acknowledged in relief. "The little theater is something for which I am fighting."

"Now *that*," Jimmy declared, "is *very* good. Oh, you'll agree with me, Mr. Brinze. Furthermore, Mrs. Gulvin, you had hoped to interest our late friend in the worthy project of endowing one of these artistic institutions?"

"Ah, but it's too late now!" she sobbed. "And he was *so* interested!"

"And you wrote him letters on the subject?" continued Jimmy sympathetically. "Nice, long, enthusiastic letters?"

"He asked me to put it in writing."

"Thank you. Mr. Gulvin, will you answer me two innocent questions?"

"If they seem proper—and only if they seem proper."

"They'll be most proper. These proceedings being strictly unconventional, I'll ask you to recall that you told me that your wife was given to extravagances of expression in promoting her dramatic projects."

"Yes, but is this relevant?"

"Nothing could be more so. And you knew that she was in communication with Mr. Payne on the matter?"

"Of course."

"Then," concluded Jimmy, "you feared that her letters to Mr. Payne might contain language which might be misconstrued. And you thought you'd rescue those letters before they became public as a result of the investigation following the recipient's death."

Gulvin blushed and nodded.

"Mr. Brinze," Jimmy remarked, "I have established the motive for Mr. Gulvin's researches among the effects of the deceased. His extra-legal methods, I admit, were not what we might have expected from so distinguished a legislator, but if you are holding him on no other grounds—" He sat down.

"That's what I call sense!" declared the stout reporter.

Brinze was plainly beaten in the Gulvin matter.

"I don't see what business it is of yours," he grunted. "Nobody asked you to defend him."

"I thought," suggested Jimmy pleasantly, "that you were anxious to get at the facts or know the reason why, and I've tried to bring out the facts and the reason why."

"That's enough of that, Mr. Wrome," announced Brinze. "There are other witnesses. Mr. Hesbe!"

BLAKE HESBE shambled to his feet, stroking his smooth blond hair.

"What, Mr. Hesbe," said Brinze, "can you tell us that might help us to find a solution for the so-called mystery surrounding the death of Mr. Payne?"

Hesbe twisted his hair.

"Why—I don't know anything. All I know is I was at the party and went out dancing with the rest of them later and next morning I heard he was dead."

"Have you any theories?"

"No—I don't know as I have."

"Maybe," Brinze commented sarcastically, "our friend Mr. Wrome would like to question Mr. Hesbe."

"Maybe I would," said Jimmy coldly. His dislike for the apparently successful rival was always growing.

"Well, if you do, don't take all morning about it."

"There's nothing that I want to ask Mr. Hesbe now. He's told his story very illuminatingly, I think."

"That's all, Mr. Hesbe."

Brinze eliminated Hesbe.

"Miss Barton."

Claire steadied herself against a chair, and Brinze repeated his formula for information.

"I don't know anything about it," she said softly.

Jimmy felt an uncomfortable thrill at hearing her voice again.

"Would this witness suit you, Mr. Wrome?" inquired Brinze.

"I once asked Miss Barton some questions," said Jimmy. "That was a month ago. I don't believe that Miss Barton cares to have me question her again."

Claire didn't look at him.

"That is unfortunate," said Brinze. "That will be all, Miss Barton."

Eddie proved to be a slightly more loquacious but equally uninformative witness, and Hugh merely confirmed the medical verdict of suicide. The reporters were restless.

"It's getting late," asserted the stout one. "Where's the story?"

"What about that gun?" asked Heidelman.

"Mr. Wrome is the authority on the gun," answered Brinze. "What about the gun, Mr. Wrome?"

Jimmy smiled cryptically. "This is your show, Mr. Brinze," he said. "I've nothing to add to what I told Mr. Heidelman."

The impasse annoyed Brinze. He rose and announced that he was through for the morning, that there would be another session later on, that the reporters were pledged to print nothing that had taken place, and that he wished them a good morning.

"Just a minute," interrupted Jimmy. "Is Mr. Gulvin still a prisoner?"

"He can go to hell for all I care," shouted Brinze, "and you, too!"

In the next instalment of "The Doctor Disagrees," the industrious amateur detective finds himself investigated—and put into jail. January EVERYBODY'S, out December 15.

The Aphorisms of Rodney Russell

A Man Among Men, Spoiled His Life Long by Always Having His Own Way, Is Bearded at Last—by a Woman

By Harold Titus

ROD RUSSELL was a rough and unscrupulous old ruffian, with a hair-trigger temper and a heart about as tender as native granite; his smiles were as rare as his business failures, which is a tremendously broad statement, and if he had ever been provided with the milk of human kindness it had soured long before he made his first million out of Michigan timber.

Anybody in that state's upper peninsula and hundreds below the Straits of Mackinac could have told you these things and would have told them willingly, when Russell was not within earshot; when he was about, the best of men held their tongues and the worst of them fawned and laughed merrily at the mostly bad and trite aphorisms with which Rod liked to punctuate his discourse. From which it will be understood that the old logger was an individual of consequence.

He was. He came into prominence at the tag end of the white-pine era and rose to financial glory with the fall of the hardwood forests. He made money hand over fist and his wealth alone would have incited gossip a plenty; add to those millions his picturesque conduct and he was certain to be the subject of much conversation whenever or wherever his name was mentioned.

He never married. "Women," he was heard to remark in his later days, "are to a man in business what water is in your carbureter." This gives a clear impression of his opinion of the opposite sex and also is a fair measure of the stupidity of his generalizations. Nevertheless, he expected men to laugh when he delivered what he called his "sayings" and there were always men ready to tickle his vanity.

He made no friends. He had a few associates, and acquaintances by the thousands; but no man was his intimate. "There are just two kinds of folks," he was fond of saying, "—my kind and the other kind; and sometimes I get awful lonesome." Of course, he never grew lonely; that statement was made by way of emphasizing his sense of superiority.

He was a glutton for achievement. If any one else wanted something that Russell wanted he could work himself into a fever of desire for that object. He would never let go until he had triumphed, by fair means if they would function, by foul if necessary, and then without compunction. "Losing out," he liked to state profoundly, "is bad; but getting beat is hell."

He had shaken and slapped the president of a Milwaukee bank in the public lobby of his office; he had upbraided a judge on the bench and got away with it; he had thrown a high executive of a great railway system through his office door into the street. Once his automobile refused to start and he set the machine afire on the main thoroughfare of Marquette and called on the world to witness the destruction of the "world's worst car." On a Christmas Eve, and during a period of depression, he discharged the crews of six camps and two mills, withholding word of his decision until that date so that his men could take the catastrophe as a holiday gift, and all because some minor incident had roiled his temper. To illustrate his social-mindedness: he sent a solicitor for a children's home away in confusion by roaring: "Madam, I make orphans; I don't support 'em!"

These are a few of the things that were told about Rod Russell, that rough, hard, irascible mountain of a man.

However, seeing him drive on this hot day along the sand trail that would take him to Shoestring, a stranger might have thought that here went a good-natured, deliberate, gray and bald old fellow. He did not force his car; he slouched back and steered with one hand; he chewed and spat comfortably and in his gray eyes was something akin to the glint of a smile.

But those who knew him best would have read in these signs indication of anything but relaxation and good nature. He was happy, after a manner, because in his coat pocket was young Cameron McIver's letter of surrender and the thick packet of bank notes which would close the one deal that had given him more trouble than he had ever known in his life, but that happiness boded no good for another. He was simply enjoying the prospect of bearing down.

FOUR years ago Rod had warned McIver; he had told the upstart that he would ride him to rags and McIver should have known that he could not cross Russell openly and make it stick. Many an older head had tried and failed. McIver had got into Rod's way when he came up from below the straits, obtained an option on the Billings timber—which Russell wanted badly—before Billings was fairly cold, and then refused flatly to talk business. More than that, he had laughed at Russell's offer, actually laughed right in Rod's face and wanted to know what he was being taken for!

"A thousand for my option? Russell, that's a joke! D'you think I'm going to pass what means a start for me to you on a silver platter? Hell's bells, no!"

That would have been bad of itself, but a half-dozen men besides the clerks in the Newberry bank heard the exchange and the incident took on proportions it would not have had otherwise.

"Boy, it's a wise man who knows when to quit," said Russell after recovering from his first shock. "You think you're going to beat me to that timber?"

"I'm not bothering about you; I've enough important things to bother about."

At that Russell spat and nodded and coined another "saying."

"It's a poor fight that ends in the first round. Now, mind your step!"

Which Cameron McIver thought he was doing. It pays a logger to watch his step. McIver's father had made and lost in timber until he had nothing to leave his son but half a college education and a legacy of experience which was made up mostly of negative maxims. The boy left his university, started out with a portable sawmill, made a big profit his first winter and before he was a half-dozen years from his college halls had a fine statement to show the men who backed him and, what is more, had the confidence of those backers and was on his way to bigger things.

The Billings timber appeared to be one of those bigger things. If Billings had lived the tract would not have been for sale, in that day of soaring stumpage values. But Billings died and of the half-dozen men who had an eye on the stuff young McIver was the quickest, got to the administrator, bought his option, safeguarded himself by an agreement which compelled the North Michigan Forest Corporation to transport his logs on its railroad, placed his loan and laughed at Rod Russell's threats.

Now, timber without transportation is much worse off than a rose without a scent and if McIver's contract with the corporation whose holdings surrounded the Billings tract had not been shell-proof he would not have dared laugh at Russell. He was completely cut off from all but that one railroad and providing his own would have entailed the purchase of much valuable property, for which he had no resources. Rod knew that. He sounded out the North Michigan people, discovered that the agreement had been made in the best of faith and went back to his lair to sulk and to plan. For some time the only comfort he derived was from his "saying" that it was a poor fight that ended in the first round.

McIver would finish up below the straits that winter, Russell learned; the next fall he would build his camps and by the time snow flew his logs would be rolling over the North Michigan steel. So Rod took a trip to Chicago and one to Minneapolis and a third to Detroit, talked in general to a dozen men, specifically to three; and at the next meeting of the Forest Corporation directors it was announced that fifty-three per cent of the stock had changed hands, all the shares gravitating eventually into the possession of Rodney S. Russell. They elected the new stockholder vice president after he had said that he wouldn't be president for anything, but that nothing short of an undertaker could keep his name from the list of officers.

Russell was not seen again at the North Michigan headquarters until winter, when he dropped in casually to talk to Bolling, the general manager, and sat watching the flat cars pulling into the main line from the branch.

"We hadn't figured McIver would work so fast," Bolling said. "Makes the car situation a little tight, but a contract's a contract."

"Yeah," said Rod, negotiating the cuspidor, "but there ain't been a contract drawn yet that couldn't be busted or else bust one of the parties. If we need the cars, what's to prevent our using 'em?"

"Our agreement," said the other uneasily. "We made it in good faith."

"Just the way I bought my stock in this comp'ny. I ain't used to considerin' anything else before I consider what's profitable for Russell."

"But, you see, this agreement—"

"Agreement, hell!" snapped Rod, and almost smiled. "We're no common carrier. While there's lawyers there's hopes of breakin' the law, a sayin' I've used before."

Bolling did not like the move, nor did the rest of the directors; but Russell was in control and young McIver was notified that the company had found it impossible to go through with the agreement and that he would be forced to provide his own transportation, which meant that he was sewed up, put away, finished! Whereupon all the Scotch in the lad came to the surface and he wanted to know, in his own words, just what the hell?

"You see"—Bolling shifted uneasily—"our vice president—"

That was enough. McIver nodded and rose and looked pityingly at the other.

"Bolling, tell your master," he said, "that I've just thought up a saying of my own: A dog in the manger gathers no moss."

McIVER went to court. He closed his camps for the time, took his bankers into his confidence, was promised extensions of credit after they had examined his agreement with the North Michigan, and girded himself for the fight.

Fight! He might as well have wooed old Rod with a lute! His case met with impossible delays. North Michigan could wait; McIver could not afford to wait, but a clever lawyer saw to it that he did.

That inability to wait was just what Russell had figured on. At the end of the first year he believed the time was ripe, so he drove down below the straits and eased into McIver's small offices and when asked by the stenographer to state his business roared that he was ready to let the young woman's boss up, for a consideration. The girl carried the message into the tiny glass-partitioned room and Rod heard her employer's voice lift itself in this reply:

"Tell him that I'm playing golf in four hours and have a letter to dictate in the meantime so I can't listen to him now. Tell him I'm going to be married in August and that I won't be able to see him before winter on that account. If he wants to say anything let him put it in writing. Offer him my deepest insults and wish him the worst of health!"

When the girl returned to repeat this message Russell's presence in town was evinced only by the bellow of his motor in the street below.

Old Rod was thinking over these incidents as he drove his car through the slashings this sultry July forenoon, but he showed no symptom of recurring anger. McIver had married and had won his case in circuit court; but there had been another case and delays and appeals. The carrying charges of the Billings tract had gone on compounding and the boy's bankers had begged and entreated him to give in; but he told them that he would not quit so long as had a dollar left, a single, lonesome dollar! When the situation reached a point where their interest might be endangered, then he would sell; not before.

Russell knew all about these threats and promises. He had a way of finding out things he wanted to know. Now, evidently, McIver had been reduced to that last, lonely dollar, for he had written to Russell briefly, saying he was ready to quit. He had named his figure and the old duffer knew that it left the boy nothing beyond enough to take care of his creditors. And that meant that he must go back to beginnings again, because his credit had been wiped out by that stubborn fight. . . .

So Rod was driving to Shoestring to meet the cub, hand over that packet of bills and take a deed to the Billings tract. He did not like to carry money with him but he would not ask McIver to take any other tender. There was no bank in Shoestring where the deal was to be made. Yesterday he had drawn the cash from his Newberry bank, taken it to his headquarters camp, slept with it under his pillow and now, as he drove contentedly along, his shotgun rested across the back seat of the car. Lately the woods had gone to pot, anyhow. In the old days his fists were enough protection but now you never could tell what might happen and the cashier had called him back yesterday to whisper about the narrow-faced youth, a stranger, who had watched him count the bills. Nonsense, of course; and the fact that the stranger had driven in to Rod's headquarters in the evening after gasoline must surely have been an unrelated incident. Still, he carried the pump gun but even the fact that it was necessary for him to rely on firearms to feel wholly safe could not take that glint of smile from the gray eyes. He had been seriously crossed for the first time and finally he had triumphed. For nearly threescore years Rod Russell had kept young on triumphs. . . .

He came around a sharp turn in the road upon a car, pulled out at one side. It was a small, cheap car, showing signs of wear. One wheel was off, the jack supporting the axle, and as Russell's purring motor gave an explosive snort when the clutch was released a girl stepped from behind the disabled automobile and stared at him. She was slender. Her eyes were brown, her face flushed and her hands, held away from the trim, white skirt, were smeared with grease.

Rod Russell was not an accommodating man, but he had grown up in big places and certain traditions were binding upon him; so he shut off his motor and looked at the girl again and asked:

"Any help?"

That brought an odd smile to her lips.

"I've been waiting two hours for some one to come along and ask that," she said. "I'm in a lot of trouble!"

Rod opened the door and removed his great bulk from beneath the wheel.

"What seems to be wrong?" he asked.

"We found out what seemed to be wrong," the girl answered, "but that was only a part of it. A bearing broke up and my husband has walked to the Junction to get a new one. It was so hot and time dragged so that I started fussing around and found that the hub is all gone. See?" She knelt beside the wheel, rammed a slim finger into the grease and exposed the jagged scars on the steel. "When my husband comes back he'll have a bearing with nothing for it to run on. He'll have to go clear back to the Junction again and we're pressed for time."

She looked up and the man's eyes went to her face. It was a strange face for him, smooth and small and young and eager; and still she talked about car parts glibly. He eyed her body: thin waist, with the flesh of her arms and shoulders showing through it; neat white skirt, silk stockings and white shoes. She gathered a handful of grass and began wiping the grease from her hands.

"You want to catch your husband and make him get the hub—that it?"

"That's it! That's why I'm glad to be asked if I need help."

"Well, going through the Junction myself. Come on along."

"Isn't that fortunate!" her lips said, but her eyes, now on the man's face, said just as plainly: "Who and what are you?" Understanding that sharp interrogation of her scrutiny gave Rod an odd sensation. Clearly, she was skeptical of him and for a brief moment debated the advisability of accepting his help. That particular sort of distrust was new, as foreign to his experience as a young woman of her sort. Somehow it stung him. She said, after the brief pause: "Of course, I will be glad of the lift."

Evidently he had come up to her standard of trustworthiness. He wiped his perspiring neck with a blue handkerchief and noted that a cloud bank was rising high in the west.

THE girl took her place beside him with a short laugh. He looked at her and was struck by the suspicion that she had been more deeply disturbed by her mishap than had at first been apparent; the set of her mouth indicated that.

"You're sure we won't miss him? There's only one road to the Junction?"

"That's all."

She sighed. "That's something. It will save time." Then: "Have you any idea how much those parts cost?"

Rod was not accustomed to analyzing subtleties of tone, but this girl's manner certainly bespoke anxiety.

"Parts to them light cars are cheap," he said, and glanced at the silken ankles, crossed beside his heavy shoes; the glance had in it some contempt for these flossy young folks who put all they had on their backs—or their legs. He did not note the careful darning at the heels. "Three—four dollars is all."

He thought she laughed then but could not be sure, for he was changing gears. She had laughed, though, with brief bitterness.

"That's a lot, sometimes."

Again he glanced at her silk stockings. He could not know the dismay with which she had discovered a run in one knee this morning.

They did not speak for a time after that. A hot blast of air flowed through the canted windshield; swarms of grasshoppers made way for them; the cloud bank in the west rose steadily, The girl fidgeted, eyeing the slim, grease-stained fingers, shifting her position frequently. She lifted the light sweater coat she carried and tossed it into the back seat, saying: "Terribly hot, isn't it?"

"Hot," the man agreed; then realized that she was staring at the shotgun behind them.

Her eyes turned to him inquiringly. "Is there anything to shoot in summer up here?" she asked.

He grunted. "Never can tell. Pays to be fixed."

She glanced back at the gun and said: "That's just like mine. I'd love to hunt in this country. We used to plan a trip up here after ducks."

Russell was again surprised.

"You hunt?" he asked, almost demanded.

"I love it!" she burst out nervously, as though his question made way for talk which meant relief. "That is, for ducks and partridge, anything that's hard to hit. I don't care much about killing, but—" She laughed again. "I like to do hard things. I used to hunt with my father. That's the way I happened to meet Mr. McIver."

She went on, telling about her hunts with her husband, talking almost aimlessly, as though concerned only with the relief words gave her and almost heedless of her companion. . . . And Rod Russell was heedless of what she said. McIver! So this was young McIver's wife! This was the one he had gone to marry when his affairs were going to pot! So, McIver was worrying about the price of parts for a cheap car, was he, and his wife was wearing silk stockings! He shoved his gears into high at the crest of a hard hill with something like savage elation and turned to look at Cameron McIver's wife with a flicker of hard triumph.

The girl was looking straight ahead.

"We never did get in our duck-shoot up here. My husband comes often but we haven't been able to afford the time or the money. Last fall we couldn't even shoot at all because ammunition was high. We used to take our guns down in the evening and clean them and talk about it, but—When you have to, you can get along without the little things, of course."

Russell spat with gusto. Yes, some could get along without things they wanted. McIver could; he, Russell, could not. That was the difference between them: McIver could take a beating but he—Russell—could not. He scratched his cheek, again heedless of the girl's talk. So this was the young bluffer's wife! Not enough money for shells or car parts, and yet she could wear silk stockings. He almost laughed. He was glad he had put them in such a pinch! He looked back at the girl, almost grinning, but she went on:

". . . so sometimes it's as hard to give up the little things as it is the big ones. When your business doesn't go as you plan it, then you have to give up the things you like most to do."

ROD could not forbear. "Your husband's business, I take it, ain't run smooth?"

The girl turned her steady eyes on him. "No," she said, and in the word was an indication that this was the thing which had worried her; it had made the accident to the car of consequence, had had a bearing on the price of parts, had set that mark of trouble on her face, had forced her to talk just for the relief of talking, even though her words did invariably come back to the distressing circumstance of poverty.

"Well, businesses don't, sometimes—some folk's," Russell said.

"That's true. You can put up with ordinary bad luck," the girl said, glancing up at the clouds, which had blotted out the sun by then. "It's not so much losing by your own mistakes, or losing in a fair fight. It's the other things that happen to businesses that hurt."

"Like what?" Old Rod was getting part of his money's worth today! This was just as good as hearing young McIver himself squeal!

"Such as getting pinched by a mean old rascal," the girl replied with heat. "Such as having some one with money and no scruples start out to get what little you have by unfair means. That's what hurts!"

"Well, it happens in business right along, don't it?"

"I suppose it does"—broodingly. "It isn't the actual loss of money that hurts so much. It's— Well, when you start out to do a thing and invest not only your capital and your credit but your pride in it, then losing hurts. Understand? It's the pride that counts most." She laughed. "A little while ago I was talking about having to get along without hunting. That was like a—like a mosquito bite compared to a broken leg, to swallowing your pride."

She looked at the man again and her eyes changed slightly, for in his face was a grimness which was startling.

"That's right, young woman. It's pride that counts most—pride!"

He leaned forward to close the windshield, for the advance guard of heavy rain drops splashed the glass. They were on top of a ridge. Far below them the slash gave to standing timber and the green forest stretched in three directions, pallid green, now, with the wind turning the leaves upside down under the heavy leaden clouds. The road they followed made a dark cavern where it plunged into the verdure. To the westward rain was throwing its veil across the land.

In Rod Russell's mind was a strong impulse as the car rocked down the steep roadway. He would tell her who he was. A mean old rascal, she had said. He wanted to tell her that this was a holiday for a mean old rascal, hearing the wife of a rattle-brained upstart whine! He would do that, he promised himself, when the rain squall was over, and he would see how she could take that dose! He was having a good time with her and he would have a good time with her husband later in the day.

The rain came in sheets and the wind rose furiously. Russell shouted something about not stopping for side curtains until they had the shelter of the timber; but when they entered the deeper gloom of the forest he did not mind the lashing rain, for a graver matter occupied him. The trees rocked before the weather and a shower of leaves and twigs came swirling down. He stopped the car and looked out. On either side the brush grew close to the wheel ruts.

"Turn around if I could," he said. "We can back out."

"Why?" the girl asked.

He simply gestured ahead where a dead limb, as thick as a man's leg, came crashing into the roadway. She understood that menace, then, and also leaned out to look backward as the car started to retrace its way slowly. It stopped before they had gone its own length.

"Worse, that way," Russell said. "The edge of the timber gets the full sweep. Half a mile on's a cabin. That's better shelter than an auto top."

He drove on, bouncing over roots and through ruts, the girl huddled against the seat, not frightened but simply alive to the danger. They saw other dead limbs come down and then living branches that had been wrenched free. They passed an uprooted tree, its base rearing as high as the car top, but it had stood on the leeward side of the road and did not block them.

THE lightning was continuous and the sound terrific, drowning the rumble and roar of the plunging car. They came suddenly into a small clearing, not wide enough to offer safety even in its center from falling stuff, but on one side stood a low, log house with sashless windows and sagging door.

They were not the only ones seeking shelter there, for another car stood by the house and a man, veiled by the downpour, appeared in the doorway. Russell stopped his motor, leaned out to see beyond the water-clouded windshield and stepped out and told the girl to sit still a moment.

He went toward the house, bowed before the savage assault of the storm. He did not mind the downpour; the danger of a storm in big timber was secondary in his consciousness. He was warm with triumph. This young woman with her silk stockings and her whimpering (he chose to think of her straightforward talk as whimpering) fed his vanity. Of course, she must be taken care of now. Any man would do that; any man would have done what he was doing now, making sure that whoever had found shelter in that cabin would not be taken by surprise and embarrass a woman.

And any man would have done just what Rod Russell did when he crossed the threshold: any man would have put his hands high up above his head—because from out the gloom of the room appeared the luminous face of a man with eyes as hard and as bright as bits of metal. He held a heavy revolver, and as he thrust the muzzle close to Rod's girth he snarled:

"Put your hands up! High! Higher!"

For a moment they poised there. Then a flicker of a smile showed in those hard, bright eyes and the man said with terse irony:

"Step into the parlor, old-timer!"

He gave the gun a twitch and backed away a step and Russell, comprehending, followed with his hands upraised. The face before him was that of the man who had watched him in the bank yesterday, against whom the cashier had given his warning, who had driven into his headquarters camp last night, for whom he had carried his loaded shotgun. . . . And now that gun was out in his car!

"That'll do," the man said, and Rod stopped. Then the voice went on: "Put on the flash, Sim; it's too dark to entertain our visitor proper."

It was dark in there, so dark that Russell had not observed the second man, but now the place was flooded with light from an electric torch.

"Back up in the corner," the first man said.

Outside, the fury of the storm had abated suddenly. The rain dwindled to nothing, the wind seemed to draw back its breath; a low mutter of thunder trailed into a silence broken only by the liquid bounce of drops shed from the canopy of foliage. It was as dark as late evening.

"What for?" asked Russell, his voice booming in the oppressive silence.

The man laughed. "Guess, Mr. Russell. We've waited for you to come along so we could help ourselves to that jack you're carrying."

The one who held the torch placed it on a broken table. He revealed himself, then: he was thin and wiry and dapper, and in his hand he held a short, nickel-plated revolver of heavy caliber, that murderous, cowardly type of weapon, fit only for use at a distance where a man might use his fists in combat.

"Money?" asked Russell. "You think I got money on me, out here, alone?"

"Into the corner!" snapped the second man. "You heard what was told you."

Rod moved reluctantly and as he went the one who had first covered him said:

"Do you no good to stall, Russell. You drew it from the bank yesterday; you don't pay off in cash at your camps; you're on your way to Shoestring with it. You told that in Newberry yesterday. Anyhow, we'll see for ourselves. Keep your hands up and turn around. Sim, go get it!"

RAGING, helpless, mind striving to find a way out of this situation, Russell faced about and suffered the second man's hands to flutter over his body. They went swiftly to his hips and coat pockets and then the fellow laughed softly. It is easier for his sort to ply their industry against unarmed men. Next, the swift hands brushed his breast and one came to a halt over the inside coat pocket, gripping the bulge of the wallet. The man stepped in front of Rod, opened his coat and walked back to his companion with a mutter of achievement.

"Sure?" the other asked.

His companion leaned toward the light, opening the bill book.

"Sure!" he said, and laughed nervously.

At that Rod Russell's hurt pride overcame his sense of danger. He half turned, though he still held his hands high.

"You're a fine pair of skunks," he said thickly.

"Shut up!"

"Shut up, be damned!" With some vent, Rod's anger grew instead of diminishing. He turned full toward them and half lowered his hands.

"Turn around!"

"Turn around, hell! I'm goin' to tell you skunks your real name and you won't shoot; you ain't got the sand to shoot, your kind, unless you're drove to it. You won't be drove to it, your kind, unless you're in a corner. If I had a popgun you'd be on your way to the coop now. I could handle six like you, if they didn't have guns! Men? The only thing about you that's a man's is your pants! You're lower than a snake's belly, and that's pretty low!"

The man who had searched him laughed, again nervously. He laid his gun on the table beside the flash-light, took the money from the wallet and counted it with unsteady hands while his companion walked close to their victim.

"You'll get hurt unless you shut your gab!" he snarled. "I know you're Rod Russell and that you're the mustard up here in the sticks. It goes hard, losin', don't it?"—thrusting his face close. "Maybe you could handle more'n six of us without guns, but we've got the Gats." He poked his gun into Russell's belly. "And we've got your jack and you're goin' to grin and bear it and shut up!"

"That's where you guess again!" Rod burst out, voice strangled with wrath. "A man won't take a chance with his hide for property, but his pride—that's different.

"You think you can shut me up before I've told you that you're damned snakes? Even if I thought you was men enough to shoot anybody that spoke straight?" His red face thrust forward between his upraised hands. "You think I'm that sort? No!" He shook his head sharply. "No, you guess wrong. Fellas like you are rotten to the hearts! You're a disgrace to the country! You won't fight, your kind; you wouldn't take an even chance with anybody, your kind. You wait till you've got a man in a corner and his life in your hands and then you'll take what anybody else'd make by the sweat of his back or his brain. Why, you're damned—warty—toads!"

There was something colossal in this outburst. He had surrendered his money without much remonstrance but this was another thing, an emotion which was heedless of danger, and as he ended he spat, viciously and copiously, full into the highwayman's face.

With an oath the man drew back and wiped his eyes with the back of a hand. But his oath was cut short and his movement checked, for from between two logs where the chinking had fallen out leaped a tongue of orange flame and the room reverberated with an explosion as it went dark. There was sound of falling metal when the torch and revolver were blown from the table, and out of the sudden darkness came a voice, clear and steady:

"Don't move, you by the door! I've got you covered!" And: "Get *him*, Mr. Russell!"

That shot meant a God-sent ally to Rod Russell. That darkness gave him his golden chance and in that split instant before the warning voice had spoken, he was on his man, binding the wriggling body close, forcing the gun hand high so the shots punctured the roof; tearing the weapon free, dropping it, lifting the man from the floor, slamming him against the wall, holding him there by a mighty grip on his clothing and slapping him as he had slapped rebellious woodsmen for decades!

Slapping him! With an open hand; but the blows sounded like the beating of meat with a stick.

A billow of wind came through the forest. Lightning struck close and the skies ripped with thunder. The deluge was renewed.

"Now, it's your turn!" boomed Rod as he dropped the one and strode toward the other.

OUTSIDE, face down in the grass, trussed up by their own belts, the two men lay where Russell had dropped them. The girl, trembling a little now, stood looking at the great hulk of the logger while he wiped his hands on the seat of his pants as though to free them from some smearing filth. Her drenched skirt clung about her, her white shoes were muddied, her hair was in disarray but her eyes were collected and scornful.

Scorn! That was the quality which Russell recognized as he turned to her. He thought at first that she shared his scorn for those men, but her eyes clung to his face oddly. For a moment he looked at her in bewilderment; then, suddenly confused, he stooped for his wallet and by the growing light which came through the doorway, counted his money.

"Well," he said, "that might have been quite a mess if I hadn't picked you up, Mrs. McIver."

An odd smile crossed the girl's face.

"You knew who I was. I had to wait until you were held up to hear your name. You *are* Rod Russell, aren't you?"

"That's my name," he said heavily, for her tone had been an indictment. "Why?"

She laughed at that. "Nothing," she said. "Nothing, except that I humiliated myself by—by confiding my troubles in you."

She moved to the door to look out at the breaking storm. The interval was embarrassing for Russell, and he scarcely knew why. He had forgotten that knowing the identity of this girl and hearing her troubles had pleased him. He thumbed his bills and extracted one, a Treasury note for one thousand dollars.

He cleared his throat and said: "Here! This is for you."

The girl turned, looked from his face to the money and back to his face. Then she put her hands behind her and shook her head.

"Go on. If it wasn't for you they'd 'a' got it all."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Would you have wanted pay for taking me to the Junction?"

"Course not."

"It was the same thing, what I did, wasn't it? You needed help I could give. They didn't see me because of the rain on the windshield. When the light came on I could see the holes between the logs. I heard everything that was said; I had your gun. It was very simple. I wouldn't take anything from anybody for a thing like that, Mr. Russell, and most certainly I wouldn't take it from you."

That last stung, and Russell, still holding the bill toward her, gave his head a forward thrust, a menacing gesture.

"How's that?" he demanded.

The girl smiled, almost as though she pitied him.

"You should know. You told that man that nothing can stop a man from saving his pride. Do you think you're the only person with pride?"

"I don't know what you're talkin' about!" he said, and his voice was that of Rod Russell, the hard old rascal; but something in him was growing cold before the scorn of this superior, steady-eyed girl.

"Then perhaps I'll explain," she said stiffly. "You have done to my husband and to me what these men tried to do to you today. You have held us up unfairly. You have taken everything we have but our pride. Everything! Even the matter of a dollar or two for car parts was a big problem for us this morning. You've stripped us down to our pride, but you can't take that!

"That is why I wouldn't take your money even if I had earned it, sir!"

"You talk pretty strong for the wife of a man who's in your husband's fix."

Again she gave that cool, rippling, biting laugh.

"We still have our pride, Mr. Russell!"

Rod was hot, and angered lights showed in his eyes. He had never been berated before, had never encountered such conviction and contempt. The girl's syllables pricked his consciousness as though it were raw flesh.

Silk stockings? A flossy sort? his mind queried. Yes, she had been that a half-hour ago, whimpering about her bad luck. But the good aim of the shotgun in her hands was no better than the aim of her courage and her wit. She had functioned as he never had believed any woman could function, without fluster or lost motion. She was a remarkable young woman, and she scorned him and the money he still foolishly held toward her!

SHE went on: "I haven't the words which you used for those men. Perhaps I can't make you understand how I feel. All I can say is that I insist that you put that money out of sight. We could have money of our own if you would play fair with us, if you could see the difference between pride and obstinacy. You were beaten by my husband at first in fair competition and since then, by low tricks, you have beaten him. We can't hold out longer; we came up here today to give you what you want—in property. It is very offensive to me to have you offering me a reward for something I would have done for anybody.

"As soon as it is safe to go on through the woods I'll let you drive me to the Junction. Until then, I wish you wouldn't even talk to me any more."

"Look here," he rumbled, stuffing the bill back in his wallet. "D'you know I've never stood for talk like that?"

"It is time you did, then," she replied evenly. "I had to tell you what I think of you. I have. Now let me alone!"

She turned away and Russell's jaw fell. He buttoned his coat slowly, left the house and grasped the helpless men and, one in either hand, half dragged, half led them to his car. He opened the door and tumbled them in as he would have handled sacks of flour. When one protested, Rod slapped him on the mouth with a vigor fit to burst his lips.

A part of him was stunned, dazed. This girl had given him a tongue-lashing without calling a name! She had scorned him and stung him by the things she left unsaid and merely indicated. She despised him, she did not know when she was beaten—or when her husband was beaten. He was like dirt beneath her feet even after he had beaten her husband! He looked up quickly, but the fresh light he sensed did not come from the sky. It was the sort of light that comes to no man from outside: a white, searing light of self-appraisal. . . .

"Hey!" he called, and the girl appeared in the doorway. "Wind's down, and we can go!" She came toward him, shotgun under her arm, and he watched her grimly, as he had watched many another he planned to humble. They took their places and the car started away, rocking through the water-filled ruts.

"I hope," Rod said after a time, "that there ain't anything down across the road." She did not respond. He added: "That'd hold us up, and your husband, he might get started back. We'll take him on into Shoestring and get it over. I've spent enough time on that timber, now."

He glared at the girl. He saw her lips tighten as she swallowed with difficulty.

"It won't take long when we get there," he continued. "We'll have our talk with Bolling."

"Where does Mr. Bolling come in?" the girl said coldly. "This transaction is between you and my husband. I should think you'd embarrassed Mr. Bolling enough by the orders you gave him in the beginning."

Russell nodded. "Yeah. I give him orders. I put the kibosh on your husband but Bolling did the work. I been thinkin' "—he cleared his throat—"about what you said about your pride. You're poor as a church mouse and yet you talk about pride! Hump! . . . Well, it'll be easy enough. Bolling can take the case out of court but he won't have to wait for that. I guess he's got cars any time that young squirt you married needs 'em."

He caught her reflection in the windshield as they traveled the gloomy road. She was staring at him, lips parted. She wasted no breath on the sort of interrogation he would have expected from her—an hour ago.

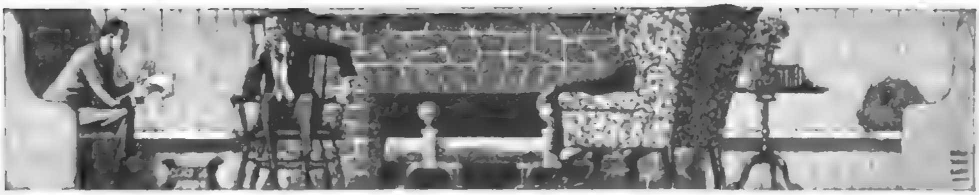
"Why are you doing that?" she asked. "Because I helped you?" Her tone was pointedly accusing.

Rod spat leisurely and wiped his chin and shook his head again.

"Oh, no! A long time ago I got up a sayin' that there's only two kinds of men in the world: my kind and the other kind. I've always said that sometimes I felt awful damned lonesome for my kind. . . . A man can get lonesome, understand, without knowin' what ails him.

"Just a while back I thought up another sayin': You can judge what a man is by the kind of woman he picks out for a wife. . . . Yes, sir, you can just about judge a man by his wife."

He drove on, looking straight ahead and once sighed deeply. He was glad the girl did not say anything for a time because, though he was a tough old cuss, he did not want to be thanked for fear that—well, for fear that some other things like those he had just discovered about himself might come bobbing up. He had always been a hater of weakness and these new emotions made him feel old and feeble. Perhaps that was why he did not begrudge the girl that brief interval she sat beside him with clasped hands pressed to her mouth and the tears brimming in her eyes.



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

WITHOUT doubt, the happiest occasion in the life of Francis R. Bellamy ("March Winds," page 9) was the day he gave up selling books and decided to write them. His first novel, "The Balance," received favorable criticisms from no less oracles than the Brooklyn *Eagle*, the Boston *Transcript*, and the *Dial*, which unanimously proclaimed it as promising. Their prophecies were fulfilled when "A Flash of Gold" appeared serially in EVERYBODY'S. In this issue his latest novel, "March Winds," makes its first appearance—the best that has come from his pen. As for a photograph he writes:

> Snapshots are taboo in my psychology. My brother took one of me at the age of ten in Switzerland and I have hardly recovered from the blow yet. The morning snapshot of myself which I get when I shave is all that I have ever needed since. Informal remarks are easier. I have been a printer's devil, a farm hand, a salesman, a theatrical producer (a very poor one), a golfer, an editor, and now an author. I've stuck to only two things, writing and golf, because they both look easy and aren't! Yesterday I found in a quotation from George Meredith why I wrote "March Winds." You can find it in "Richard Feverel." "An audience will come to whom it will be given to see the elementary machinery at work; who, as it were, from some slight hint of the straws, will feel the winds of March when they do not blow." Certainly there is the name of my story. Nothing could be happier. The only difference between his philosophy and my realization is that my March Winds do considerable blowing.

EMMA-LINDSAY SQUIER ("The Soul of Caliban," page 45) makes her bow to EVERYBODY'S readers with a dog story of unusual merit. Incidentally, she is another proof of the theory that to write convincingly one must live intensively. Certainly she has done that. She writes:

> There have been so many unusual things that it is hard to remember them. I gave a dramatic recital in Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, four hundred feet underground, in "Ole Bull's Hall." I have worked in a dynamite factory, driven a pair of mules through a forest fire, been adopted by a Siwash chief. Have called moose in Nova Scotia, ridden herd on buffaloes in Yellowstone, been in a cage with six lions, and made friends with a porcupine.

IN THE November Chimney Corner a letter from Octavus Roy Cohen told of a group of writers living in Birmingham, Alabama. This month Jack Bethea, a member of that group, comes to EVERYBODY'S with "The Valley of Humility" (page 51) and to the Chimney Corner with a few words about himself:

> I was born in Birmingham thirty-two years ago and have lived there intermittently all my life. This is the heart of the Alabama coal fields and when I began to write I naturally turned to the locality I knew. Having been in the newspaper business here for fifteen years, there isn't a great deal to say about myself. I suppose that I have had my share of thrills and the drama that are inseparable from the chronicling of the life of an industrial city.

MORE and more authors are drawing their situations from the life about them. Imagination still plays its potent part but it is imagination corrected by experience. Ralph Barstow ("The Seeds of Greatness," page 127) says of his work and of himself in the third person:

> There is a rapidly growing number of men and women writing stories who are very different from the old-fashioned notion of an author. They are people who are busily engaged in some other field of activity and whose writing is almost in the nature of a pastime. Not that it is lightly undertaken or considered as fooling, but that it is an avocation. Such a one is the author of "The Seeds of Greatness," whose real work in life is that of a sales counselor.

Enter Emma-Lindsay Squier, who plainly reveals her love of animals both tame and wild in her stories about them (see page 45).

He has been a salesman and a sales manager for more years than he is willing to tell and during his eager search for experience has held many jobs. The material for the theatrical setting of the life of Sara was gathered during his experience as a professional entertainer and his many visits "backstage." The desire to be an actor, however, quickly wore off and he has enjoyed the stage more as an entertainment, as a background to a very interesting phase of life, than he ever did while he was on it. As he says: "Every good salesman must have the qualities of an actor to present his wares interestingly."

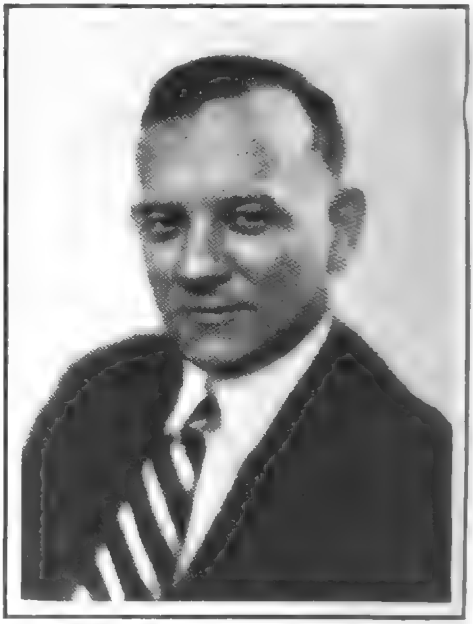
SPEAKING further about his work, Mr. Barstow gives credit to his wife for her inspiration:

> We have been married only sixteen years and, of course, we don't know yet whether the thing is going to be a success, but for my own part, I wouldn't change my partner. She has a sly little way of molding me without my realizing it (at the time) and a quiet and unostentatious knack of adding to a story those touches that somehow atone for the rough edges I have left.

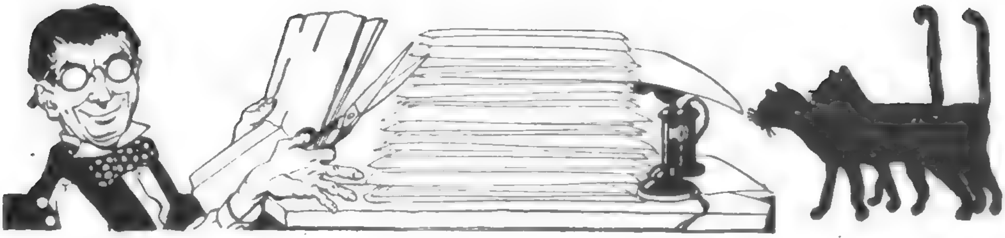
IN THE efforts involved in conducting this department to discover a few salient and interesting facts about the men and women who make this magazine, certain things crop up again and again. It isn't possible, of course, to work out a formula—to say that to be an author one should have certain definite characteristics. But some things nearly all writers do seem to have in common.

They are curious. It stands to reason that they should be, of course, but they are curious in a way that sometimes, at least, must be baffling and annoying to their friends, associates, wives, husbands, and so on. There is one writer (probably, indeed, there are many like him) who cannot pass a sign. He simply cannot do it. The smaller the sign or notice, the harder it is to read, the more trouble there is involved in getting at it, the more determined he is. He will drive his car into a ditch along a country road to read a frayed and tattered notice of an auction held three months since; he will cross a city street to discover that I. Mandelbaum has made an assignment for the benefit of his creditors.

And so it goes. Authors swell the crowds that follow the fire engine, that cluster about the ambulance, that lean over a fence to watch the operations of a steam shovel engaged in preparing the foundations for a new apartment house. They are curious precisely as children are curious. And that, finally, is the point. Children are all story-tellers by instinct. Their curiosity is never pointless and idle. They stare, they run about to see things, simply that they may run home and tell what they have seen. And the ones who grow up to be authors are, one supposes, those whose parents listen to them and find some sort of joy in doing so.



Jack Bethea, of the Alabama group of writers, presents a powerful case for the tempering of legal justice with mercy (see page 51).



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

In St. Paul: "*I. D. Mix, Pharmacist.*" (MISS V. L.)
In Milltown, Wis.: "*Greener & Greener, Chiropractors.*" (MISS V. L.)
On Delaware Ave., Buffalo: "*H. H. Bury, Undertaker.*" (J. M., JR.)
In Chicago restaurant: "*Lime of Bean Soup.*" (J. E.)
In San Antonio: "*Poppe, Florist.*" (J. E.)
In Colorado, Tex., restaurant: "*Plane Steak, Irish Stue, Hole Chicken.*" (J. E.)
In Big Spring, Tex.: "*Dr. Hirt.*" (J. E.)
Student in Mississippi Medical College: "*Ben Aiken.*" (J. E.)

(From a country weekly)

"We found Mrs. Bonham a pleasant little woman whose husband had earned her pretty new machine by chewing tobacco. I reckon you think that is a mighty funny method of earning anything, but some tobacco has tags which are redeemable, and the machine was one of the premiums. Mrs. Bonham just beamed with pride as she rolled out her machine. "I never had a machine before," she explained. "I just went to the neighbors when I had to sew. So of course I wanted a machine awfully bad. So Frank just chawed and chawed and I saved every tag till we got enough, and last year we got the machine. Frank is chawing out a clock now; but that won't take him so long as the machine did."

Where tempus just has to fugit.

(New Hope items in Sparta, Tenn., Expositor)

Col. Measles is no better.
Miss Dollie Poore is sick.
Hog killing is the go of the day.

Well, what do you know about that?

(Waverly, Ia., Democrat)

Miss Fern Parsley of Greene spent last week at the Frank Carney home.

Where the chili con carne was properly garnished.

(Louisville Courier-Journal)

Bowling Green, Ky.—Claude Miller was mistaken for a squirrel by his companion, John Glass, and shot by him.

Nut time in the bluegrass section.

(Savanna, Ill., Times-Journal)

Messrs. Beer and Pretzel motored from Elizabeth yesterday and visited with friends.

A friendship that never *will* die.

(Chicago Tribune)

WANTED—MEN TO WORK AND SLEEP IN store. Permanent. 609 W. Division-st.

Most clerks do it *now*.

(Maywood, Ill., Herald)

FOR SALE—ONE OLD BROKEN-DOWN Acorn range, burns wood, sometimes hard to bake in, rusted, one leg gone, cheap. 1011 South Third Avenue.

A darned good stove for the shape she's in.

(Chilton, Wis., Independent-Journal)

Local residents will regret to learn that Leonard Sternhagen had a narrow escape from death while hunting.

***I* never liked him, either.**

(Chicago Tribune)

FIND SISTER, LOST 15 YEARS AGO, IN CHICAGO MATRON

Then that Jonah story can't be far from wrong, can it?

(Madison Democrat)

"SUIT of clothes slightly ruined for sale."

Surely ought to last until you get 'em on.

Copyright, 1924, by Gridley Adams.

(Grand Rapids Herald)

Lester Hawk of Nashville has been sentenced to serve from nine months to five years in the Ionia reformatory after being held guilty of several poultry thefts in the eastern part of Barry county.

They've got that old bird at last, have they?

(Calumet Index)

FOR SALE—BABY CARRIAGE AND HANDwringer. 254 West 108th Place.

What a rainy summer we've been having!

(Gary Post)

The jam became so severe that a number of women suffered slight bruises in the lobby.

Ouch!

(Woodstock Sentinel of May 18)

TO THE PUBLIC: I will do plain sewing or washing for self support. Mrs. Leonora Bennett, 142 West First Street.

(From the Sentinel of May 25)

TO THE PUBLIC: I didn't mean any harm by putting in "self support." I wanted to earn my little spending money by the work at home. I did not mean to hurt my husband in any way, as the people look at it, for I think the world of him. I'll stand by him through thick and thin, no matter what the people say. Mrs. Leonora Bennett.

There's a help-meet for you, alrite, alrite.

(Elyria, Ohio, Telegram)

After the ceremony the family party will rejoice with the bride and groom, speeding them on their honeymoon. The interesting rooms of the Wick mansion, which bespeak the culture and grace of generations, will be illuminated by soft-shaded lights that will cast a glamour over the occasion which the happy pair give promise of perpetuating.

Yes, but somewhat dimmed, 'cause one wick looks zif 'twas going out.

(Sparta, Tenn., Expositor)

Sunday-school is holding up fine, considering the absence of several of our young people.

Not knocking the absentees.

(Rock Island Union)

She is well known here, and her friends will be surprised to learn of her marriage.

Sure, we never thought *she'd* catch any one.

(Kennebec Journal)

Hugh Poland returned Saturday from Bangor and passed the week-end in bath with his family.

Reviving an ancient Saturday night rite.

(Wendell, Idaho, Irrigationist)

Mrs. K. A. Thomas, while driving across the Snake river bridge at Weiser, was thrown from the vehicle in which she was seated due to the frightening of the horse attached to the rig by a passing auto.

Boy, read that over again.

(Chicago News)

TROUSERS—LOST IN RESTAURANT ON Cicero and Chicago-av., Sat., 5 P.M. Finder call Austin 7700. Reward $5.

And he never knew until the waiter made him stop eating.

(Galesburg, Ill., Republican-Register)

Mr. and Mrs. Ouray Meyer and son Edwin, of Kansas City, spent the week end with Dr. and Mrs. Bailey. Mrs. Meyer and Bailey were roommates at Lombard college.

The reporter hasn't been seen since.

(Sign on meat shop in Wheatley, Ark.)

Please Have Enough Respek for Our Meat Market Not to Use Any Profannity on the Sidewalk in Front of It.

Sure; c'mon inside where we *all* can hear it.

(Cranberry recipe in Chicago Tribune)

Get Your Iron! Make a Mock-Cherry Pie! A Delicious Dessert!

Why an "iron"? Why not a *nibble*-lick, or a spoon?

(Chicago Tribune)

WILL EXCHANGE FULL-SIZE BRASS BED with box-springs and mattress, complete, for twin beds. Address M. M., 339 Tribune.

Now you're *talking!*

(Dwight, Ill., Star and Herald)

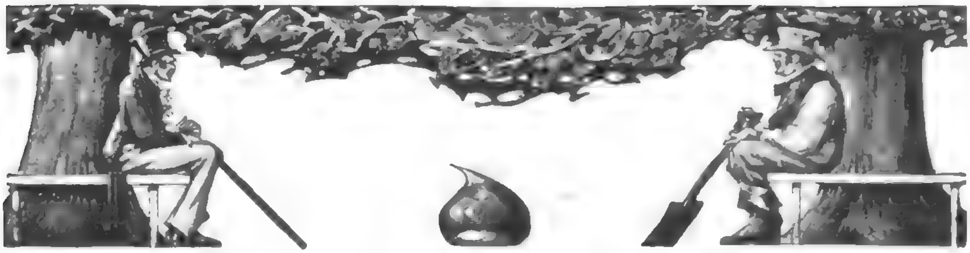
A reunion of the Rumney family was held Aug. 18th at the home of John Finch. Mrs. Martha Finch was the only one living that was present.

Must have been a very stiff affair.

FREE-FOR-ALL FIGHT DISTURBS WEDDING; SUCCESS OTHERWISE

Dayton, O.—John Zickus, 24, didn't get to act as best man at the wedding of a friend today. He vented his wrath by hitting the pastor, the Rev. M. Cubaleski, on the nose. Women of the congregation then mobbed and beat Zickus. After he was rescued by a police squad he was arraigned in police court on a charge of assault and battery. The wedding was a success in other respects.

And they all lived happily ever after.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

SIX-YEAR-OLD Mabel came over to her little neighbor's the morning after the great event.

"I have a little brother now and you haven't," she boasted to Beatrice.

In haughty tones her playmate returned: "That's nothin'. The doctor came to our houth first; but my dad and I wanted a little sister."

"DID you interview the eminent statesman?"

"Yes."

"What did he have to say?"

"Nothing."

"I know that. But how many columns of it?"

"I THOUGHT you said last night that Jen's complexion was ruined."

"So I did."

"But there she is, looking as beautiful as ever."

"I referred to her last night's complexion."

THE Baptist preacher had just finished an enthusiastic exhortation. "Now, brudders an' sisters, come up to de altar an' hab yo' sins washed away."

All came but one man.

"Brudder Washington, don't yo' want yo' sins washed away?"

"I done had ma sins washed away."

"Yo' has! Where'd yo' git hit done?"

"Ober at de Methodist Church."

"Ah, Brudder Washington, yo' ain't been washed. Yo' jes been dry-cleaned."

THE Jenks family had worked hard all their lives. After oil had been struck on their land, they hardly knew how to spend the large amount of money that came to them. The father and sons got together to plan a surprise for mother's birthday.

One thing after another was suggested but nothing good enough for mother could be found. At last they bought mother a new ax "so's it'll be easier for her to cut the wood."

"GOOD evening, parson," said the proprietor of the sweet cider mill to the Rev. Mr. Smith, who had recently left the city to take a pastorate in the country. "Want some more sweet cider?"

"Er—yes," replied the pastor. "I bought some here about six weeks ago that was exceedingly fine, and I was wondering if you might have some left out of the same batch?"

HALFWAY across the lake on his first boating expedition, Rastus noticed quite a little water in the bottom of the boat. Somewhat agitated, he took his penknife and got down on his hands and knees.

"What you gwine do, boy?" asked his boating companion.

"I's gwine let some of this heah watah out," explained Rastus, "'foah we gits heavy an' sinks!"

"HOW do you sell those apples, little girl?" asked the tourist of the farmer's child.

"Well," replied the girl, "we puts the big ones on top."

A ROOSTER by perseverance rolled an ostrich egg into the chicken yard. He called the hens and said:

"Now I'm not casting any insinuations or reproaching any of you hens, but I just want you to see what is being done in other places."

IT IS a poor town that cannot boast of something to the stranger within its gates.

"This is one of our greatest show-places," said this resident, while he was conducting a guest about the town.

"Why, it's only a vacant lot!" replied the friend.

"Certainly, but it's where the circus always performs when it comes to town," responded the proud citizen.

RAE: I hate the sight of him. He's the rudest thing. Why, when I was talking to him the other day he yawned at least a dozen times.

MAE: Are you sure he was yawning, dear? He may have been trying to say something.

DOT: Why is Myrtle so unpopular?

TOT: Won first prize in a beauty contest.

DOROTHY, six years old, was used to hearing more or less shop talk at home, both her parents having been, at one time, in the advertising business.

Last Sunday she brought home from Sunday-school a Golden Text. Her mother, seeing something in her hand, asked what she had. Dorothy immediately replied, with a little shrug of her shoulders, "Oh, only an ad about God."

EX-SENATOR COLE of California vouches for this story, told by Lincoln:

"Old Squire Bagley, from Menard, came into my office one day and said: 'Abe, I want your advice as a lawyer. Has a man what's been elected justice of the peace a right to issue a marriage license?'

"I told him no; whereupon the old squire threw himself back in his chair very indignantly and said: 'Abe, I thought you was a lawyer. Now, me and Bob Thomas had a bet on this thing, and we agreed to let you decide; but if this is your opinion I don't want it, for I know a thunderin' sight better. I've been a squire eight years, and I've issued marriage licenses all the time.' "

A THOROUGHLY honest and upright man is one who tells the whole truth about a second-hand car which he is trying to sell to a fellow he doesn't care for.

"THE speaker who has just closed," said the president of the Health Congress, "is a striking example of the efficacy of the doctrines that he so eloquently advocates. Hale and hearty at eighty years of age, he could tire out many a man younger than himself."

A voice from the audience:

"He did."

A YOUNG matron was entertaining the new clergyman and at dinner he proved to be so brilliant that the table was in a continuous gale of laughter.

Finally when the dinner was over, the hostess, drying the tears of mirth from her eyes, sighed: "If I were a queen, I should certainly revive old customs and have a fool present at every meal."

A WEALTHY motorist drove up to a gasoline station in the South.

"Hey, boy!" he called. "I want some gasoline. Get a move on you! You'll never get anywhere in this world unless you push. When I was young I pushed, and that got me where I am now."

"Well, boss," said the lazy country boy, "I reckon as how you'll have to push again, 'cause we ain't got a drop of gas in the place."

IT WAS the custom of the immortal Socrates to forgather with a circle of philosophers and geometricians about a convivial bowl, drawing inspiration from the vintage of Bacchus, nevertheless having a corking time. After the tenth round he would rise —for it is written that he always could rise—and address the symposium.

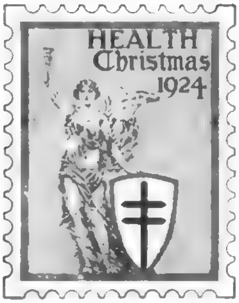
"I move," he would say, "that this circle go home and square itself."

And so seriously did the multitude take him that the squaring of the circle grew to be considered impossible, yea, even unto this day.

"ISN'T there a fable about the ass disguising himself with a lion's skin?"

"Yes, but now the colleges do the trick with a sheepskin."

Give them Health



WE are told that three wise men followed the Star and jour- eyed to Bethlehem that first Christ- as night, carrying gorgeous gifts— old, Frankincense and Myrrh.

nd so the beautiful custom of hristmas gift-giving began. But, as me went on, many people made udgery of this lovely practice. aking up Christmas lists became most as perfunctory as making undry lists. Tom, Dick and Harry ceived the usual neckties, handkerchiefs and cks. Betty was put on Mary's list, and Mary n Betty's, because both hesitated to break a social ustom. Would it not be a sensible thing this hristmas to give more as our hearts may prompt?

* * * *

wenty-one years ago, on Christmas Eve, a oung man stood at his work in a post-office in r-away Denmark. Thousands of Christmas tters were pouring through his hands. And as e worked he thought how wonderful it would e if all the happy people who were sending glad uletide messages would add a special Christmas amp to their letters and cards. That extra oney would build a hospital in his town for the ildren sick with tuberculosis!

he young man took his big idea to the King and ueen of Denmark. His plan was enthusiastically eeted. The first Christmas Seals appeared in enmark in 1904—and the little children got eir hospital.

om this simple beginning grew the widespread ustom of selling Christmas Seals to fight the reat White Plague.

Tuberculosis can be cured—can be prevented, and eventually wiped from the face of the earth. But the great battle against it cannot be left solely to those who support our welfare institutions.

Vast amounts of money are needed to bring back to health those who have been stricken with this most cruel of all diseases. Money for open-air camps out in the woods or on sunny mountain slopes—money for long, restful vacations free from worry—money for proper food and care. Still *more* money is needed for the great work of prevention. And this money will be raised through the sale of the little Christmas Seals.

* * * *

Plaintive voices are calling to you for help. Will you help them? Let's *all* get together to help rid the world of this dread disease that shows no mercy for rich or poor.

Buy Christmas Seals as you never bought before. Buy till it makes you happy. Place a voluntary "health tax" on all your cheerful Yuletide letters and thus brighten your gift packages with these gay little symbols of hope. The Christmas candles in your heart will burn more brightly because you have helped to smooth away some of the troubles of the world. This Christmas give the greatest gift of all—the gift of health!

THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS

In spite of the splendid work already accomplished in the way of prevention and cure, there are still in the United States a million sufferers from Tuberculosis. A majority of these lives can be saved if right steps are taken immediately.

In twenty years, the tuberculosis death rate in the United States has been cut one-half. In some places, the improvement has been even greater. For example, for seven years, the Metropolitan has assisted in a demonstration of health work in an industrial city, and there the deaths from tuberculosis showed a decline of 69 per cent. The Metropolitan has also been able to obtain most excellent results in its Mount McGregor sanatorium for employees. About 70 per cent of the 1,354 sufferers from tuberculosis discharged from the institution during the last nine years are still at work.

Tuberculosis can be detected in its early stages and can be checked. If men, women and children were given a thorough physical examination every year and took steps to correct physical impairments, 4 out of 5 deaths from Tuberculosis would be prevented.

The Metropolitan has prepared a booklet telling how to prevent and how to cure Tuberculosis. A free copy of "A War on Consumption" will be mailed to all who ask for it.

HALEY FISKE, *President.*

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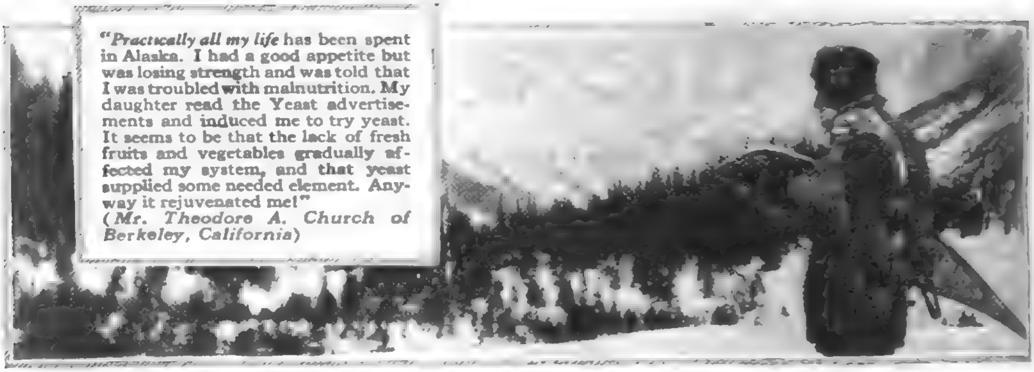

"*Practically all my life* has been spent in Alaska. I had a good appetite but was losing strength and was told that I was troubled with malnutrition. My daughter read the Yeast advertisements and induced me to try yeast. It seems to be that the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables gradually affected my system, and that yeast supplied some needed element. Anyway it rejuvenated me!"
(Mr. Theodore A. Church of Berkeley, California)

Incredibly simple! yet - thousands are finding their health again in just this way

THESE remarkable reports are typical of thousands of similar tributes to Fleischmann's Yeast.

There is nothing mysterious about its action. It is not a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense. But when the body is choked with the poisons of constipation — or when its vitality is low so that skin, stomach and general health are affected — this simple, natural food achieves literally amazing results. Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are millions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work — invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active. Health is yours once more.

"*I am a regular walking, talking advertisement* for Fleischmann's Yeast. All my life I have been practically an invalid, due to constipation. When Fleischmann's Yeast was recommended to me, I ate three cakes a day. And after six weeks' treatment was cured.

"The cure has been permanent. I don't think there is a greater example than myself of what Fleischmann's Yeast can do for one, suffering as I was for *37 years with chronic constipation* and all the ills that follow."
(Mrs. W. C. Matthews of New Orleans, La.)

"*Being a physician, I realized that I had Chronic Gastritis.* After eating, I always experienced a feeling of distress and depression, which led to pain. When Yeast was suggested, it seemed to hold no prospect of final restoration to health, but good logic prompted me to take it. I began by eating one cake of Fleischmann's Yeast after each meal. I triumphed: for, in two months my sufferings ended, and since then I have felt no pain or discomfort."
(Capt. Joseph Finberg, Medical Corps, Chicago)

Dissolve one cake in a glass of water (just hot enough to drink)

— before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast, when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation. Or eat 2 or 3 cakes a day — spread on bread or crackers—dissolved in fruit juices or milk—or eat it plain. Fleischmann's Yeast comes only in the tinfoil package — it cannot be purchased in tablet form.

All grocers have it. Start eating it today! You can order several cakes at a time, for yeast will keep fresh in a cool, dry place for two or three days. Write us for further information or let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-11, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

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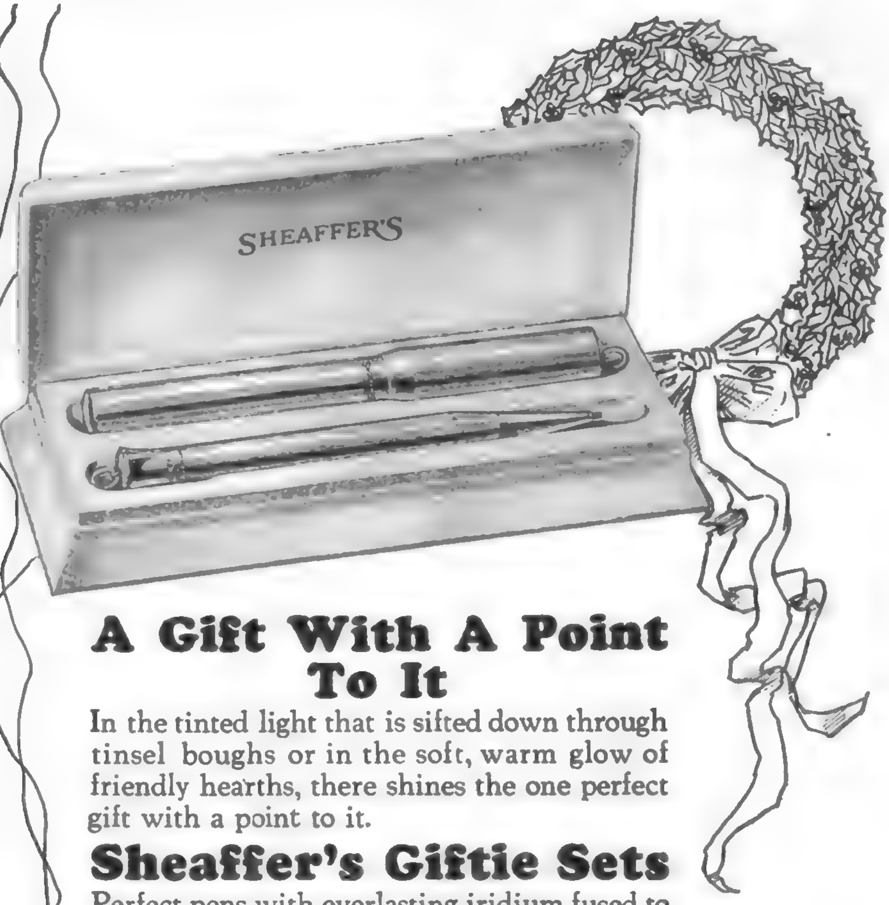
FLEISCHMANN'S
YEAST
FOR
HEALTH



A Gift With A Point To It

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Perfect pens with everlasting iridium fused to the point. Slender bodies of gold and silver in designs that captivate the eye. All furnished with the patented Sheaffer lever-filler and air-tight cap that cannot leak and unexpectedly ruin your finest apparel.

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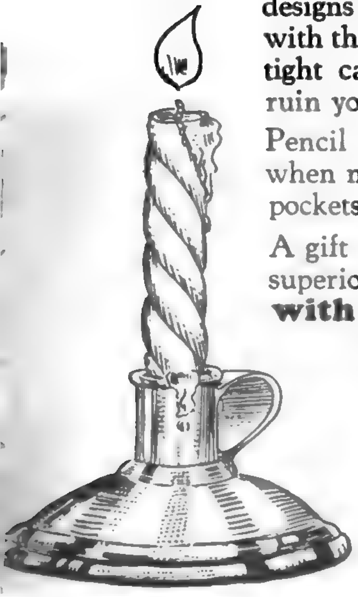

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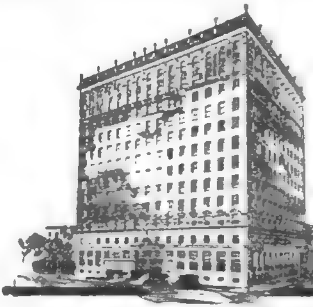

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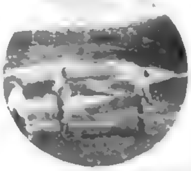

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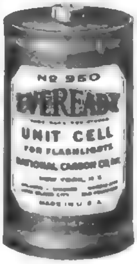

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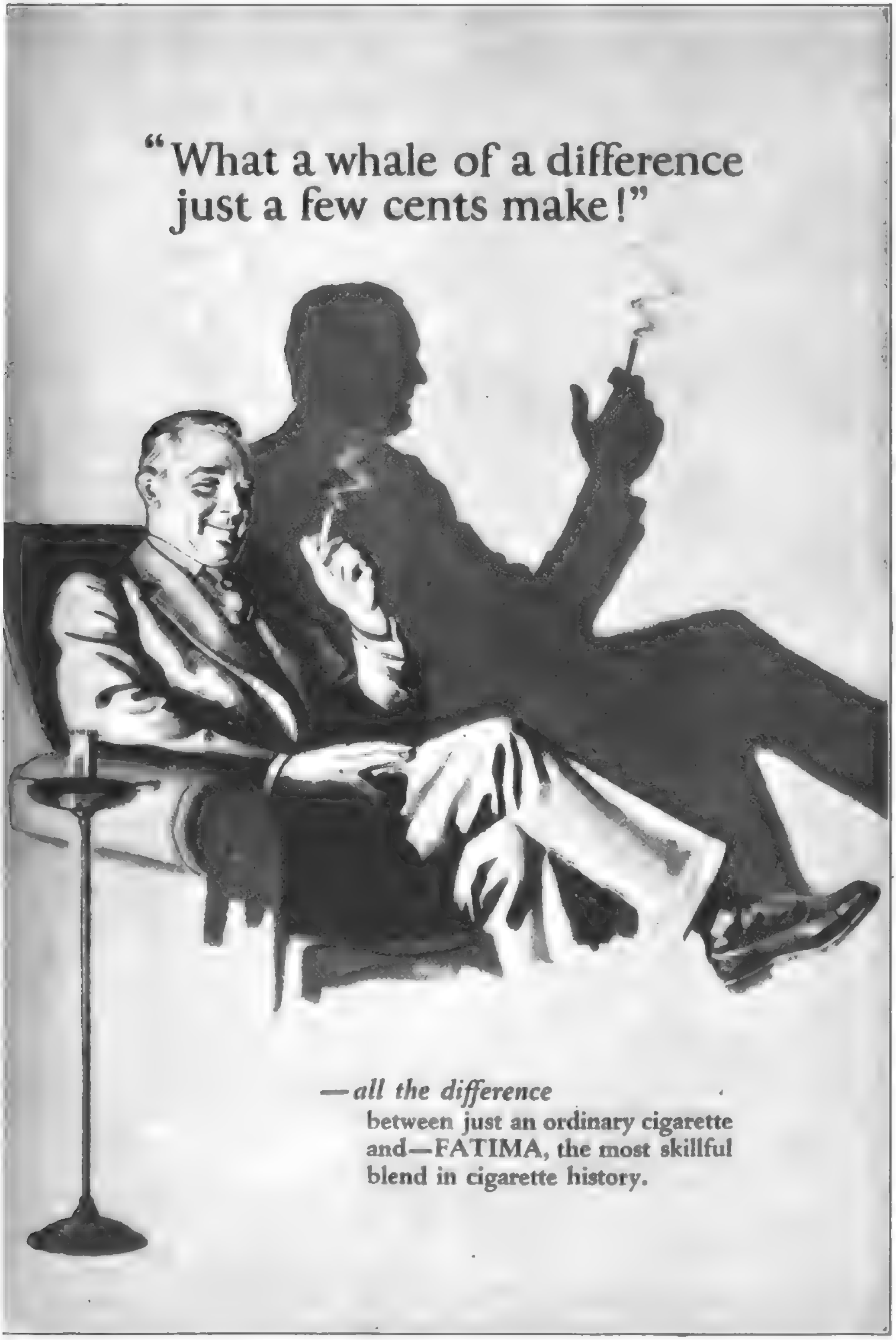

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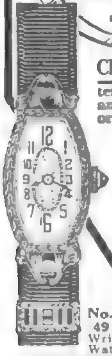

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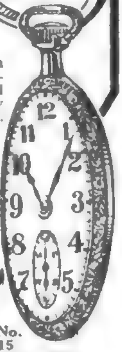

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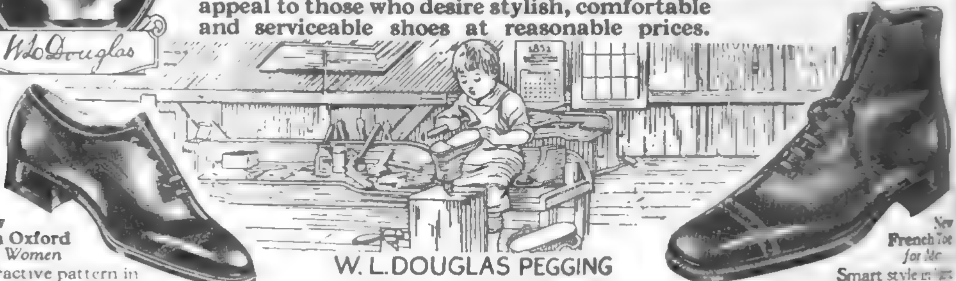

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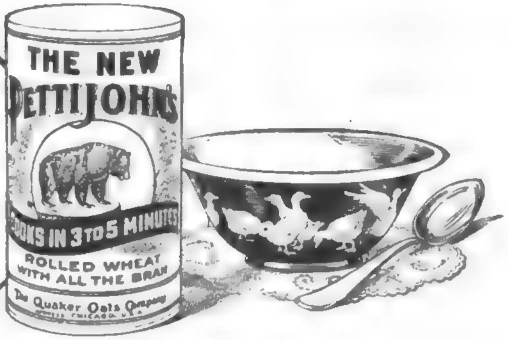

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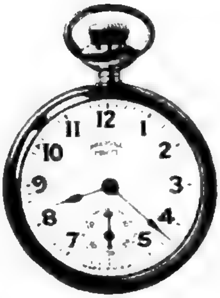

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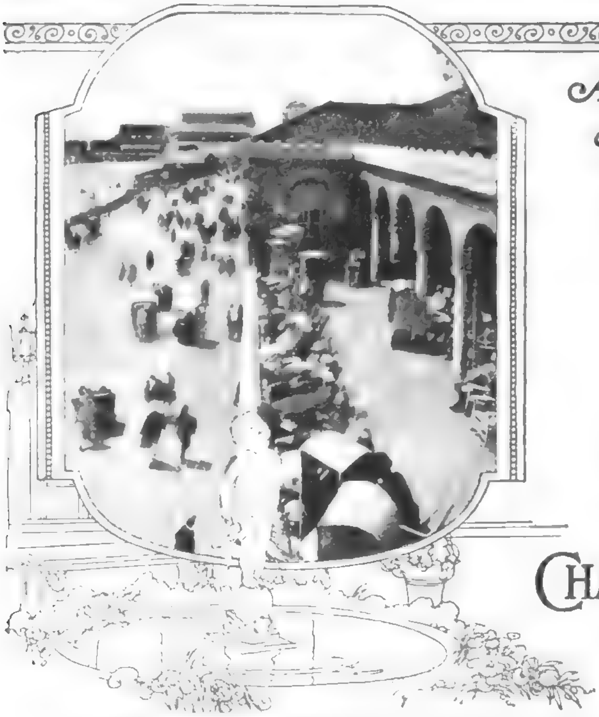

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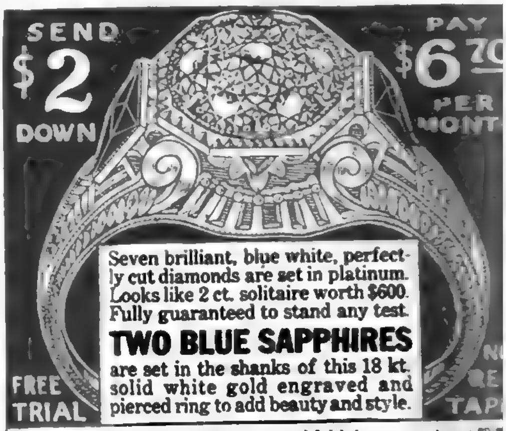

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⅓	"	$65.65	1¼	"	$246.25	
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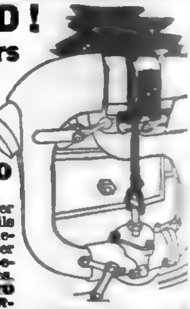

to use and introduce attachment that makes Fords run on 94% air. THERMOSTAT on exhaust automatically turns down needle valve as engine warms, exactly as Ford Manual says do by hand.

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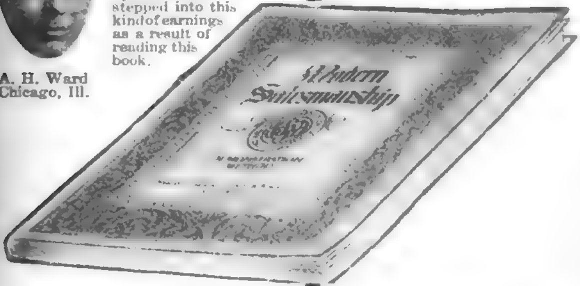
What This Amazing Book Did for These 8 Men

A. H. Ward
Chicago, Ill.

$12,000 A Year!

A. H. Ward, Chicago, held a small pay job. Now he averages $12,000 a year as a salesman. Last month he cleaned up $1,250—and he stepped into this kind of earnings as a result of reading this book.

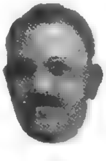


$1,000 in 30 Days

"After ten years in the railway mail service I decided to make a change. My earnings during the past thirty days were more than $1,000."—W. Hartle, Chicago, Ill.

First Month $1,000

"The very first month I earned $1,000. I was formerly a farmhand."—Charles Berry, Winterset, Iowa.



$523 in Two Weeks

"I had never earned more than $60 a month. Last week I cleared $306 and this week $218."—Geo. W. Kearns, Oklahoma City.

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"I want to tell you that the N. S. T. A. helped me to a good selling position with the Shaw-Walker Company."—Wm. W. Johnstone, Jr., S. Minneapolis, Minn.

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"Last week my earnings amounted to $554.37; this week will go over $400."—F. Wynn, Portland, Ore.

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O. H. Malfroot, of Boston, Mass., stepped into a $10,000 position as a SALES MANAGER—so thorough is this training.

It would be just as easy to tell the same story about 20,000 men—even more—but what this book brought these eight men is typical. If you do not get a big salary increase after reading this message you have no one but yourself to blame. This amazing book is

NOW FREE

IT seems such a simple thing—but the eight men on this page who did this simple thing were shown the way to quickly jump from deadly, monotonous routine work and miserable earnings to incomes running anywhere from $5,000 to $10,000 a year. They sent for the book, "Modern Salesmanship," that you can now get—free.

Possibly it is just as hard for you at this moment to see quick success ahead as it was for A. H. Ward of Chicago. When he was a soldier in France, wondering how he would make a living if he got back home safely, $10,000 a year seemed a million miles away. But read what happened after he had read the book we want you to send for. Almost overnight, as far as time is concerned, he was making real money. In one year he made $12,000.

There is nothing unusual about Mr. Ward, or about his success. Thousands after reading this book have duplicated what he did—Mr. Ward simply was willing to investigate.

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SUCCESS INSIDE TWENTY WEEKS

Within twenty weeks you can be ready to forge ahead. This may sound remarkable—but after seventeen years of intensive investigation the National Demonstration Method has been perfected—and this means you can now step into a selling position in one-fourth the time it formerly took to prepare for this greatest of all money-making professions.

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There is nothing remarkable about the success that men enjoy shortly after they take up this result-securing system of Salesmanship training. For there are certain ways to approach different types of prospects, certain ways to stimulate keen interest—certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudice, outwit competition and make the prospect act. Learn these secrets and brilliant success awaits you in the selling field.

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Simply send the coupon for this Free Book. Ask yourself the questions it contains. The answers you make will show you definitely whether a big success awaits you in this fascinating field. Then the road is clear before you. This amazing book will be a revelation to you.

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Age..........Occupation.............

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FOR THE GUMS

Four out of Five are marked

Be the one who outwits Pyorrhea —use Forhan's twice daily

Study the crowd as it hurries to and fro. Four out of five over forty years of age, and thousands younger, will pay Pyorrhea's dreaded toll.

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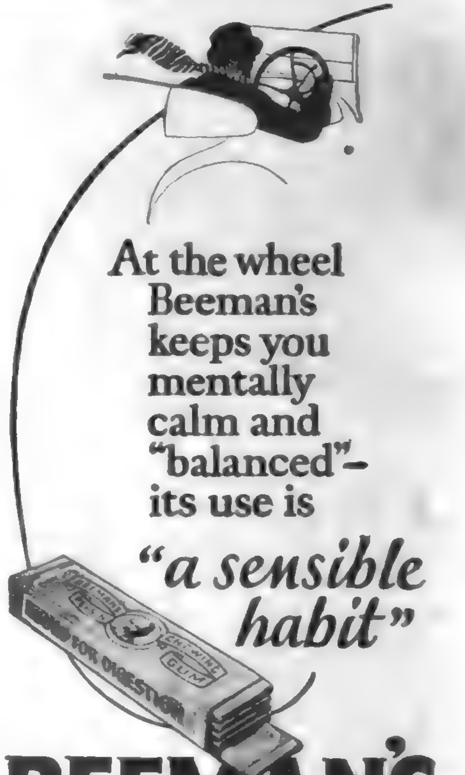
At all druggists, 35c and 60c.

Forhan's
FOR THE GUMS



At the wheel Beeman's keeps you mentally calm and "balanced"—its use is

"a sensible habit"

BEEMAN'S
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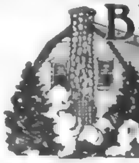

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EVERYBODY'S
December, 1924

Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $[illegible] in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1899, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

Volume LI
Number 6

5 famous points

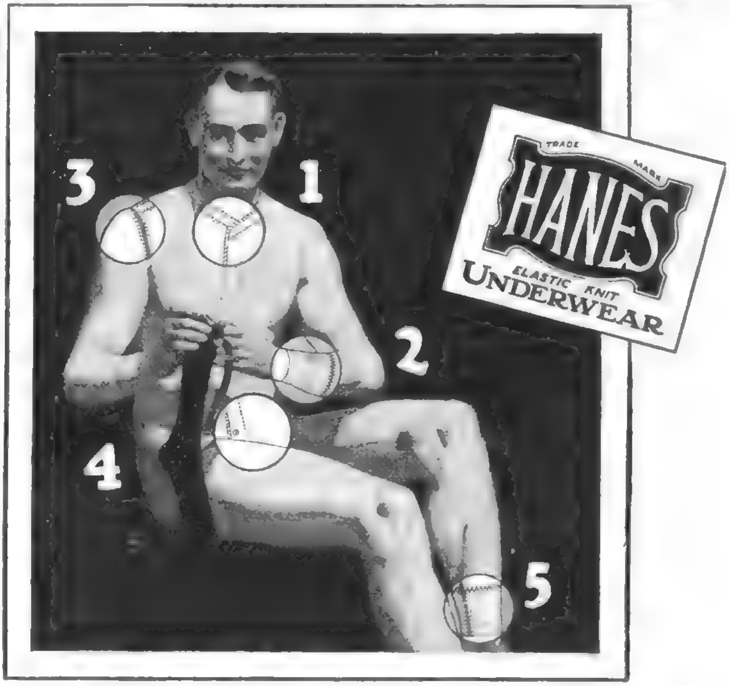
1 **Hanes** *Collarettes are cut to size. A 40 suit has a 40 collarette. Won't roll or pucker. Protect the chest from cold draughts, and let the top-shirt lie smooth.*

2 **Hanes** *Cuffs won't pull off. They snug the wrist. Reinforced on the end to prevent raveling and gaping. Sleeves are exact length—not uneven.*

3 **Hanes** *Elastic Shoulders give with every movement, because they're made with a service-doubling lap seam. Comfortable. Strong.*

4 **Hanes** *Closed Crotch really* STAYS *closed. Double gusset in thigh another comfort feature. Crotch can't bind, for* **Hanes** *is fitted by* TRUNK *measurement, as well as chest.*

5 **Hanes** *Elastic Ankles never bunch over the shoe-tops. No ugly pucker showing under the socks. One leg is exactly the same length as the other. They're mates!*



You can *pay* more, but you can't *get* more!

Men, there just isn't any sense paying more than the Hanes *price to get* Hanes value. There's no doubt about it, Hanes is the best winter underwear in the world for the money. And you can prove it.

It has comfort. It has wear. It has the warmth you want to keep you snug and well in winter's worst. Three weights take care of any climate. We especially recommend the Heavy Weight for all practical purposes, and at a popular price.

You get your *true size* in Hanes, which guarantees real comfort. Hanes Union Suits are fitted by *trunk* measurement as well as chest measurement. You can walk and work and stoop and stretch with never a bind or bunch. That's *something!*

You will know genuine Hanes by the famous red label. It is guaranteed absolutely—every thread, stitch and button, or your money back. Go to the nearest Hanes dealer and see this big-value underwear. Compare it detail by detail with the 5 Famous Points. Union suits, also shirts-and-drawers.

Hanes Boys' Underwear is great value, too, because it's made of the same materials and with the same care. Union suits only. Two weights—heavy and extra heavy. Sizes 2 to 16 years. 2 to 4 year sizes with drop seats. Also knee length and short sleeves.

P. H. HANES KNITTING COMPANY
Winston-Salem, N. C.

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IT was written to his employer by the International Correspondence Schools. It told how "Robert Johnson had enrolled for a course of home-study and had received a mark of 94 for his first lesson."

Bob answered the summons to the Chief's office with just a little fear and trembling, for a lot of men were being dropped—a lot more were having their pay reduced.

But as Bob came in, his employer did a surprising thing. He got up quickly from his desk and grasped Bob warmly by the hand.

"I want to congratulate you, young man, on the marks you are making with the I. C. S. I am glad to see that you are training yourself not only for your present job but for the job ahead.

"We're cutting the pay-roll. Until I received this letter, I had you in mind as one of the men to be dropped. But not now. Keep on studying—keep your eyes open—and pretty soon there'll be a still better job for you around here. We're always looking for trained men."

Won't you let the I. C. S. help you, too? Won't you trade a few hours of your spare time for a good job, a good salary and the comforts that go with it? Then mark the work you like best on the coupon below and mail it to Scranton today. That doesn't obligate you in the least, but it will be your first big step towards success. *Do it now!*

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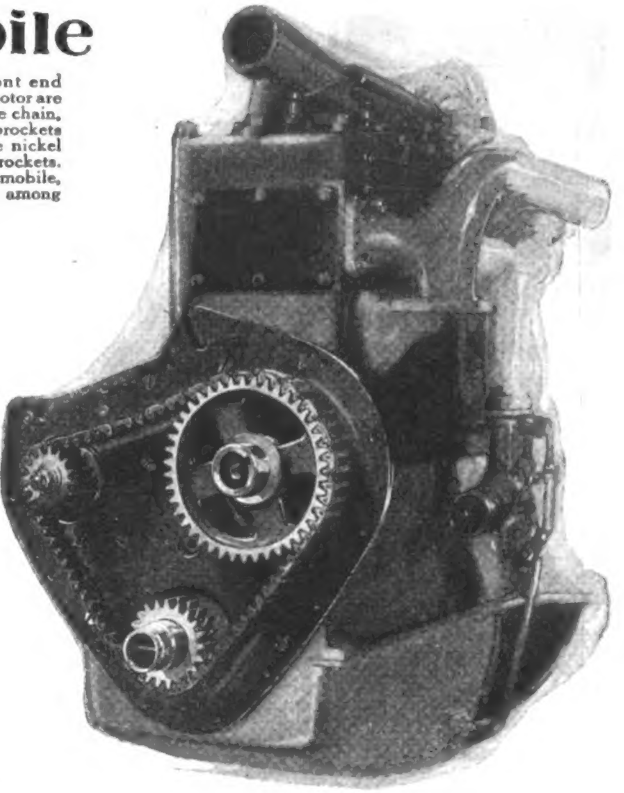

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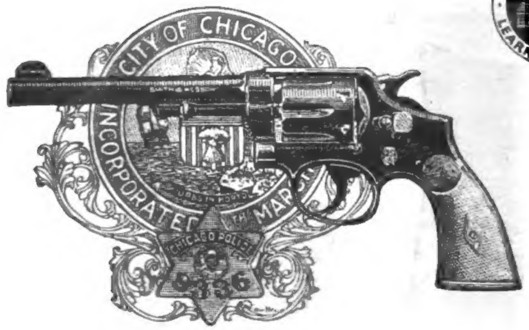

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